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Diamond Dirk; OR, The Mystery of the Yellowstone

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ROY, THE BOY BUCCANEER," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I. THE DEATH-SHOT.

A CURLING column of blue smoke floated lazily upward from a little clump of timber, overhanging the clear waters of Trail creek, not many miles from the great and wonderful valley of the Yellowstone, whose mysteries are known to but few men, and whose marvelous beauties will become the theme of the historian, the traveler and the poet.

Through the trees glimmered a cheerful fire of huge logs, and around it were grouped half a dozen men enjoying the blazing warmth, for a light snow lay upon the ground, and a cold wind was blowing up with the approaching night.

In the background of the camp-fire were two tents, and behind these, sheltered from the wind by the canvas walls and thick foliage, were a dozen horses, or rather Indian ponies, those hardy little animals that climb the mountains like a goat, and scour the prairies with the speed of an antelope.

Hanging to the limbs of the trees were saddles, bridles and other accoutrements, while leaning against the trunks were several rifles, ready at hand for use.

It was a cheerful camp-scene, and those about the fire seemed greatly to enjoy it; for they were idly watching the movements of a negro, as he skillfully prepared a most tempting supper of buffalo-steaks, prairie birds, onions, roast potatoes and coffee.

Another negro was busy bustling about the tents, spreading blankets and preparing for the night's rest, which soon all would seek.

The four remaining persons were strangely unlike in appearance, and two of them seemed wholly unused to a wild life upon the plains.

One of these was evidently an Englishman—tall, well-formed, handsome and stern-looking.

He was dressed in the suit of a huntsman, and wore a soft slouch hat that cast his face in deeper shadow, while

he half reclined upon a folded serape and puffed silently away at a cigar.

Upon his right, seated-upon a log, was a man of slender form, swarthy face, and quick, nervous manner, while his dark eyes seemed ever flitting from face to face.

His hunting-suit was faultless, his nationality evidently French, and his manners easy and those of a thorough man of the world.

Upon the left of the Englishman was one who in any land would be recognized as an American.

He was a man of striking appearance, dressed half in buck-skin, half in military attire, for he wore his fringed leggins stuck in cavalry boots, and his dark, curling hair was sheltered by a broad-rimmed sombrero encircled by a golden cord, and ornamented with a pair of crossed sabers of gold.

His form was faultless, graceful, and his face not only a very handsome one, but every fea-

ture was stamped with fearlessness, determination and intellect.

At the time he is presented to the reader he was engaged in polishing the silver mounting of his Evans's rifle, which held in its slender stock thirty-four leaden messengers of death.

Upon the other side of the fire, quiet and meditative, sat a prairie-man, for such his attire and appearance indicated.

His buck-skin suit was worn, yet fancifully fringed, and trimmed with quills stained red and blue.

He was a man of herculean build, about forty years of age, and with a face weather-beaten and scarred, as if from exposure to rough usage of the elements, steel and lead.

Around his waist was a buck-skin belt, holding a pair of serviceable revolvers, and a long knife, whose blade was dented from hilt to point.

A faded, stained sombrero covered his head, and at his side, as if from habit, was his rifle, a seven-shooter.

As the shades of night crept over the encampment the snow began to fall heavily, and the party of four gathered around the repast set before them by the negro cook—those four were the Englishman, the Earl of Lochiel; his comrade, Jules Vernon, once an officer of the French army; Captain Leo Markham, from Fort Ellis, and to whom the English noble had brought letters of introduction from friends in New York, and who had accepted the invitation to join the party for a hunt in the Yellowstone valley.

The fourth man was Trapper Dan, the scout and guide of the expedition, and said to be the only man who had ever gone alone into the unknown land which love of adventure and sport had influenced the Earl of Lochiel and Jules Vernon to explore.

At Boseman the expedition had been fitted out, ponies, pack-mules and other necessities purchased, and with a competent guide and Pompey and Jake, the two negro servants, the daring little party had set forth upon their adventurous trip—adventurous, because around them were bands of hostile Indians, and they were going into a country where few white men and no red men dare go.

An unknown land where strange stories were told of stranger deeds done there, where lakes of icy and boiling waters were side by side, and silvery streams bounded over precipices a thousand feet in height.

Where dark caverns penetrated the mountains, and deep canyons sent forth ten



Diamond Dirk drew rein suddenly—forcing his steed back upon his haunches.

thousand echoes from one sound—where weird, spectral beings were said to dwell, and which the Indians called the home of the Bad Spirit.

But undaunted by superstition and strange rumors the daring party pushed on, and left behind them their fellow-men.

As the snowy flakes fell around them and shut out all the world except about their camp-fire, and the winds howled mournfully through the tree-tops, the party crouched closer to each other, and more logs were thrown upon the fire, for they could not but feel a dread, a loneliness, that would not be banished.

Then, from his shelter in the tent, a large, gaunt hound arose, sniffed the air, and from his red mouth came forth a long and piteous howl.

Thrice it was repeated, and Pompey, the cook, said, in subdued tones:

"Now just listen ter that durned dorg—he's tryin' to skeer us."

"Yas, an' he needn't try no more, 'kase I'se skeered now," announced Jake.

Whether Lord Gilbert, the Earl of Lochiel, was impressed also by the dog's pitiful wail, I know not, but he said sternly:

"Down, Noble! down, sir!"

"Yas, my lord, or his cussed racket'll fetch Inguns lookin' for us, an' then some on us will git er bullet inter our hearts," said Trapper Dan.

Then he arose, and continued quietly:

"I'll just scout round the camp a leetle, an' then we'll turn in, for I is very tired, an' I'se got a heavy feelin' heur."

As he spoke he laid his hand upon his heart—the last act of his life, for from the gloom of the trees came a whirring sound, and Trapper Dan fell heavily to the ground.

Leo Markham was the first one by his side, and a cry of horror burst from his lips:

"Good God! an arrow is buried in his heart!"

CHAPTER II.

ON THE TRAIL.

SEVERAL days after the departure of the party of Lord Gilbert from Boseman City, a stranger arrived in town, coming from Sterling.

He was well mounted, well dressed, and well armed—a slender, graceful youth, seeming scarcely more than twenty, and yet with a face strangely sad and strangely stern commingled.

His features were bold, and most regular, his eyes large, full of fire, and even restless, while upon his mouth rested a look of almost nervousness, though his manner was cool as an iceberg, and his hand as steady as iron.

Stopping at the best tavern in Boseman, he at once sought the host and asked:

"Have you entertained an English nobleman and a Frenchman here of late?"

"Yes; they left several days ago upon a foolhardy trip to the Yellowstone."

A shade of disappointment crossed the face of the stranger, and he said, slowly:

"To the Yellowstone?"

"Yes—they have gone on a hunt there; but I think the Inguns will soon drive 'em back."

"How many were in the party?"

"The Englishman, the Frenchman, Captain Leo Markham, an officer from the fort, Trapper Dan, the guide, and two niggers."

"Six—this is risky, I should think: but it is absolutely necessary that I should follow this party, landlord, and I would be glad if you would direct me to a guide."

"You ain't a-going alone, stranger? You'll be nabbed, sure."

"I'll be glad to have you tell me where I can get a guide?" asked the stranger, unheeding the remark of the host.

"There is none of the boys in, now—"

"Yas—there's several as has just come in from Alf Slade's old ranch," volunteered a bar-room loafer, and he added, with a view to earning a drink, "I'll go and tell 'em yer wants ter see 'em."

"Do so, my man," and the stranger handed the loafer a shinplaster.

"Host, give me a room, and when the men come send them up—also have dinner for me in an hour."

The stranger was shown to the best room in the house, for there was something in his manner and appearance that commanded respect.

With an air of weariness he threw himself into a chair and covered his face with his hands.

For some moments he sat thus, and when at length he removed his hands his face was very pale, his lips white and stern.

"Yes, the end is coming—after long years the end is almost here—a few more days and Gilbert, Earl of Lochiel, Jules Vernon and myself will again meet face to face—meet, not as we once did, but in the American wilds where I

have tracked them—Ha! here comes the guide. Come in!" he called out as a knock was heard.

"Here is several of ther boys, in, an' they's teams, you bet, ef yer want fellers as is on the shoot at the drop o' a hat," and the messenger thus introduced four men, who entered the room with him.

Four men whose appearance was certainly border-like, and who looked as though they were all that they had been represented—tall, muscular, rough-looking fellows, with long beards, and longer hair—men who held their lives in their hands, who dwelt upon the open prairie two-thirds of tife time, and were in some devilmint the other third.

They were dressed in frontier garb and were thoroughly armed with revolvers and long knives.

"Be seated, gentlemen—I sent for you to talk business—here, my man, have glasses, liquors and cigars sent up."

The loafer disappeared and the men threw themselves into chairs, and gazed upon the mere youth before them.

Then the loafer returned, accompanied by a servant bearing the required drinkables; behind the two came another personage—a tall, splendidly-formed man, of perhaps twenty-five, with a face strangely handsome, a blonde mustache that a Broadway exquisite would have been proud of, long golden curls that a woman would have envied, and dark-blue eyes, fringed with the longest lashes.

His was a face that if possessed by a woman would have won men's hearts by the score—as a man's face, it was the admiration of both men and women.

He was dressed in a new suit of the finest buck-skin, ornamented with symbols worked in blue, black and red quills, and beads of various colors.

He wore moccasins, and his step was as light as an Indian's, while his head was sheltered by a dove-colored sombrero, pinned up on one side with a small, gold dirk, in the hilt of which glittered a diamond of rare size and purity.

Around his waist was a sash of red silk, half concealing a pair of large silver-mounted pistols, and a gold-handled bowie-knife, while at his back slung one of Evans's thirty-four shooting rifles.

He looked more like an exquisite,—dressed for a masquerade, than a frontiersman—yet there was something in his darkly browned face that proved he had seen rough service.

As he took a seat near the window, and bowed to the stranger, he smiled pleasantly, the act displaying even rows of the whitest teeth.

"This heur is Diamond Dirk, sir, the boss of ther prairie, an' ther whitest man in these heur parts.

Such was the loafer's introduction of the new comer, who said, pleasantly:

"My name is Dudley, sir—on the plains my friends call me Dirk Dudley, and Diamond Dirk, on account of a whim I have to wear this pin in my hat. Whisky Sam heur says you desire to speak with me."

There was something in Diamond Dirk's manner that at once drew the stranger toward him, and he returned with respect:

"My name is Belford, sir, and I am glad to meet you. I sent for a guide to the Yellowstone, and Sam here, has returned with you gentlemen—help yourselves, please, to drinks and then we will talk business."

The four first comers at once obeyed the invitation, and generously, while Whisky Sam, the loafer, sidled up to the table and dashed off a quantity of brandy that would have served a small hospital for medicinal purposes.

Dirk Dudley did not drink, neither did Burt Belford—the name marked on the stranger's saddle-pockets. The former said, politely:

"Excuse me, sir—liquor unsteadies one's nerves—I seldom drink: you wish a guide to the Yellowstone, you said?"

"Yes—a party of six persons left here several days ago, for that country, and it is my desire to strike their trail—I wish a competent guide, and as many men as you think necessary to take for protection—will you be that guide?"

"Yes—the Yellowstone is a country into which few white men venture, and seldom is a red-skin found in the vicinity: I will guide you there, sir, and my four comrades, here, will go too—will you not, boys?"

"Oh yas, we'll go anywhar for tin," said Powder Bob, so called from his powder-burnt face.

"You shall be liberally paid, all of you—to you, Dudley, I leave the fitting out of the expedition—here is money—and I desire to start with to-morrow's sun."

"We will be ready, sir—are you well mounted yourself?"

"Yes, and thoroughly armed—if you wish two more men, besides our four friends here, get them, for the service I am going on, I warn you, is no child's play—I wish men to face any danger that I dare risk."

"We're ther boys ter dance ter yer musick, you bet," said Prairie Pete, one of the worthy quartette.

"That is what I wish—he who skulks, quarrels with me—let the boys have some money out of what I have given you, Dudley, to get anything that they may need: but mind you, no spreeing—he who gets drunk I will leave behind," and Burt Belford spoke in an earnest manner that proved he would not be trifled with.

A moment after he was alone with his seemingly gloomy thoughts: but with the break of day he was in the saddle, and with Dirk Dudley, and six stalwart frontiersmen, rode away out of Boseman, and struck out upon the trail of Lord Gilbert and his party.

CHAPTER III.

A STRANGE DELIVERANCE.

WHEN Leo Markham beheld the arrow imbedded in the heart of Trapper Dan, he lost no time in vain regrets, but with more courage than prudence, bounded at once into the timber, running in the direction from whence the shot had come—he was maddened at the cowardly assassination of the poor guide, and was determined to avenge him.

He had gone but a few rods, when a tall form was dimly seen flying before him.

With increased speed the young soldier rushed on, firing several shots at the retreating form: but apparently with no effect, as the assassin sped on with undiminished vigor.

Dimly seen through the falling snow, and shadows of night, the fugitive looked strangely weirdlike and spectral, for he was clad from head to foot in white, and seemed of herculean build.

"Ha! I am gaining upon him—he is a tremendous fellow, but I will try my strength with him," cried Leo Markham, and with increased speed, he rushed on—rushed on to the next instant be confronted by the pursued—he had suddenly turned upon his pursuer.

Quickly the young officer raised his revolver and pulled the trigger—the cap snapped, and ere he could offer more resistance he was in the arms of a giant.

Leo Markham was the crack shot, rider and gymnast of the fort, and his strength was considered marvelous; but he suddenly found himself powerless to struggle even, in the arms of the being who then held him in his powerful grasp.

Could it be human? he thought—this huge, brute-like being, robed in the skin of a grizzly bear, tall, muscular, and almost a giant?

The eyes glared in the darkness, and it seemed that by their light almost, the young soldier discovered that masses of dark hair hung to his adversary's waist, and a beard, knotted and rough, reached to his belt, in which was a long, double-bladed knife.

The hard run after the wild-looking man, caused Leo Markham to pant for breath; but he noticed that he who held him thus powerless to move, breathed naturally; the race had been nothing to him.

With gigantic efforts Leo Markham struggled to free himself—to at least raise his revolver, or draw his knife—it was impossible—the man held him in a clutch of iron, while he hissed forth in a voice hoarse with passion:

"You have followed me to your ruin, boy—come, come to my dominions; you will make rare sport for me in my home of the damned."

"Good God! I am in the hands of a madman—the strange stories told by hunters and Indians are but too true," thought Leo Markham, and with desperate energy he made another effort to free himself.

But in vain the struggle; the madman held his arms in his clutch of steel, raised him from the ground and strode swiftly away through the timber, muttering unintelligible words in his hoarse, hollow voice.

A mile perhaps he had gone, and then he pushed aside the thick foliage of a thicket, as if to thread his way through, yet still holding the soldier in his iron grasp.

As the thicket parted there came a loud roar, a heavy blow, and Leo Markham felt the blood spurt from a wound in his head.

With a scream of rage, a demoniacal shriek, the madman hurled his prisoner from him with terrible force and sprung forward.

Leo Markham's head struck the trunk of a tree, and the fall half-stunned him; yet though unable to rise, he witnessed the terrible scene that followed.

The thicket's foliage was shoved violently aside, and from it, with angry growls, stalked a huge bear, reared upon his hind-feet, mouth open, and fore-claws extended—a monster of the forest, disturbed in his lair, and turning upon him who had dared to intrude upon his nap.

But he, who in his bear-skin attire, seemed scarcely less brutish than the great monster, drew his gleaming knife, and, with a terrible cry, rushed to the attack.

With terrific force the man and brute came together—clinched, and then began an awful struggle, with the half-stunned soldier as an audience.

Over the snow-clad earth, crashing through the thicket, trampling the ground, crushing the branches, and with savage growls and fierce cries, the man and the brute struggled in the deadly combat—struggled until the growls of the monster became weaker and weaker, and the cries of the madman fiercer and louder.

At length the two fell heavily to the ground—a fierce moment of combat, and the human being sprung to his feet, a long, loud, savage shout of joy bursting from his lips, his huge blood-drenched knife raised above his head.

Then Leo Markham, still weak and benumbed, attempted to prepare for the death-struggle, which he expected would come, for mad with blood he feared his captor would turn upon him.

With a great effort he managed to raise his revolver; but ere he could fire there burst from the madman's lips a peal of demoniac laughter, and with the speed of a deer he bounded away and disappeared in the timber.

"Thank God! he has forgotten my very existence—now, Leo Markham, if you prize life, you had better strike the back trail for camp, or you may yet see that devil's dominions."

So saying, the young soldier shook himself together as best he could, staggered to his feet, and taking the track they had come and which was plainly marked through the snow, he walked on with all the strength and speed he could summon.

As he proceeded he gained new strength, and after half an hour came in sight of the campfire.

A moment more and he threw himself down before the burning logs, his head and face red with blood, from one of the sharp claws of the bear in his first blow, and his appearance that of a man who had seen something terrible.

"Well, you met and punished the slayer of the guide," cried Lord Gilbert, hurrying anxiously toward him.

"I met him—it was the Devil himself," said Leo Markham fainted away from loss of blood and exhaustion.

CHAPTER IV.

MORE MYSTERY.

LORD Gilbert was considerable of a surgeon in his way—in early life he had seen rough service in India, and more than once felt a Sepoy's knife or bullet seeking his own life, hence he at once set to work to dress the cut in Captain Markham's head, and stanch the bleeding.

This done, he soon revived the young soldier, who had fainted from loss of blood, and in an hour's time Leo Markham was able to give a full account of his strange adventure and timely deliverance by a wild beast, scarcely more wild than the madman.

"Now, what is to be done? Trapper Dan lies over there, under yonder tree, dead—the arrow pierced his heart, and we are without a guide," said Lord Gilbert.

"True, and I am not enough of a plainsman to act as guide—were the snow off the ground, I could doubtless do well enough; but my limited frontier knowledge of trailing ceases at this difficulty—we will have to retrace our steps," replied Captain Markham.

"It is too bad; but I will get other guides and return—I will not be disappointed of my hunt in these wilds. Will you be well enough to ride to-morrow?"

"Oh, yes; I'll be all right in the morning. We will then bury poor Dan and return to the fort for guides—I am anxious to solve this mystery of the mad giant, for he is nothing else—I was a mere child in his powerful clutch."

A few moments longer conversation and the party laid down to rest, the two dogs of the expedition acting as sentinels, and Pompey and Jake placing themselves between two large logs they carried into their tent, for the purpose, as the latter remarked:

"To sarcumvent dem red cusses an' de big devil."

They were afraid of a shot in the dark, and preferred to have an arrow or bullet bury itself in a log rather than their valuable bodies.

With the peep of day the camp was astir.

The snow had ceased to fall, but dull, leaden clouds hung low in the skies, and the earth was white over hill and valley.

Beneath a large tree, with the snow for his winding-sheet, lay the cold form of the guide, who was soon after consigned to his shallow grave, his blanket wrapped around him.

In the bark of the tree at the head of his grave Jules Vernon skillfully carved the name and date of death of the dead man, and then the three white men sat down to the breakfast which Pompey had prepared.

They had barely finished when Jake dashed into the camp from the timber, where he had gone to catch a loose pony, and his face was ashen with fright as he cried:

"Oh, Lordy! oh, Lordy!"

"What the devil is the matter, man? Speak out!" cried Lord Gilbert.

"I dunno; I dunno."

"You do not know? Well, what are you frightened about, you black scamp?"

"I seed a ghost—fore the Lord I did," cried the negro.

"A ghost! nonsense. You have been frightened at your own shadow, Jake," said Leo Markham.

"No, sah! I don't hab no shadow when de sun don't shine. I was out yander, an' I heard a noise, an' a hoss went by me like lightnin', an' on he back was a gal."

"An Indian, or a white girl, Jake?"

"How I know, sah! She went flyin', I tell you, an' I made tracks fur camp."

Leo Markham was about to reply, when from the summit of a hill near by came a loud, clear halloo.

All started, and turned their eyes in the direction from whence came the sound; but they could see no one.

Again was the halloo repeated, and in his ringing voice Leo Markham shouted back in answer.

"The Indians are on your trail—strike camp at once, and retreat up the Yellowstone valley. They will not follow you there."

The voice was clear, distinct, girlish, but the speaker was invisible. Who could she be?

None knew, none could guess, and in wonderment they remained silent.

"I have warned you—you have no time to lose—the red-skins are not far away," again called out the voice.

"Our guide was killed last night. We know not the way," cried Leo Markham.

"Then come to this hill, strike my trail—you can easily follow it through the snow, and I will lead you to a place of safety."

"Who are you?"

"Your guide."

"Are you man or woman?"

"It matters not. Hasten, for you have no time to lose."

A short consultation followed, and it was decided to follow the strange guide, lead where he or she might.

"What else could they do?"

They were without a guide far in the wilderness, and like drowning men they caught at a straw.

The ponies were quickly saddled, the tents struck and packed, and then the party moved away from the encampment, marked by the grave of Trapper Dan.

Leo Markham led the way, and upon reaching the summit of the hill whence the voice had come, they discerned the tracks of a pony, evidently an unshod mustang.

The trail had come from the timber where Jake had been to catch the stray pony, and led down from the hill into the valley.

But the pony and its mysterious rider were nowhere to be seen—they had disappeared, leaving behind a well-marked trail.

Without hesitation they followed the freshly-made tracks, and as they went down the hill-side there was wafted to their ears from the plains behind them the sound of distant firing, and the wild war-cries of the Sioux.

Their strange guide had told the truth—there was danger behind them, and at a rapid pace they pushed on in the trail of their unknown and unseen friend, who had promised to lead

them to safety, and yet who kept so mysteriously out of their sight.

Each one of the little party had the same thought—were they being led to safety or death?

CHAPTER V.

FATHER AND SON.

FROM the wilds of the American frontier, where the red-skin and coyote alike hang on the trail of the white man, to the pleasant shores of old England, the kind reader is transported—to a scene of rare beauty where wealth and cultivated tastes have made a lordly home all that man could desire.

Fronting the restless sea stands a grand old homestead, where generation after generation of a noble name have sprung into existence, lived their allotted span of years, and found a resting-place in the family burying-ground, excepting a few brave spirits who have fallen on the field of battle in foreign lands, or gone to a deep grave beneath the sea.

In a magnificently-furnished chamber of this lordly home, some eighteen years before the opening of this story, were two persons, whose faces and forms were strangely alike, though there was nearly two score of years difference between their ages.

The one was a haughty-faced, handsome man of sixty-five, with erect, graceful form, although his hair and beard were snow-white.

He was attired in dressing-gown and slippers, sat in a large easy-chair, and upon his face rested a look of stern displeasure.

Before him, erect, proud-looking, yet respectful, stood his youthful counterpart, his son.

A little larger framed, perhaps, than his father, yet strangely like him in face and form.

His eyes were dark, his features regular, and altogether, clad as he was in the uniform of a cavalry officer, he was a splendid-looking specimen of manhood.

"Then you positively refuse to marry the Lady Rosine, sir?" asked the elderly gentleman sternly.

"I do, father—as I told you, my hand must go with my heart—and my heart is already pledged to another."

"Nonsense—the Lady Rosine is beautiful, an heiress, of the best blood of England, and you are a fool not to jump at the chance of becoming her husband."

"I admit, father, that she is all that you say; but I am in love with another and will not break my pledged word to her."

"And that other is—"

"I would prefer not to name her, sir—when I return from India, if I am not killed there, I hope to make her my wife."

"Of course she is a pauper?" sneeringly said the old nobleman.

"She is little better, sir—her father is very poor."

"I thought it; but I command you to tell me her name."

The young officer was silent a moment—then he said:

"Do you remember, father, that when my yacht was wrecked a year ago on the coast below here, a young girl saved my life at the risk of her own—came out alone in a life-boat and took me from the wreck, ay, and half a dozen others?"

"Yes—her father was a reduced gentleman, and I repaid the deed by getting him a situation as keeper of the light-house on the point below."

"True, sir; but the deed the daughter did for me can never be repaid. I love her, and she loves me."

The old man was upon his feet in an instant—

"You love the daughter of Luther Lawton?"

"Yes sir—I confess it frankly."

"You, the heir to my name, title and estates, make this confession—that you love a poor, uneducated—"

"Hold, father! she is poor, I admit: but her education is second to no lady's in England—she is beautiful, true, and all that a woman should be that I would call my wife."

"Though in humble circumstances her father has given her every advantage, and to-day she is in every respect the equal of the lovely Lady Rosine."

The young man spoke warmly, yet with perfect respect in tone and manner.

"You are a fool, boy—and more, I command you never to again breathe to me the name of the daughter of Luther Lawton—him, I know of old, and she is doubtless a chip of the old block. I had hoped to carry the news to the Lady Rosine that you offered her your hand and heart—I will tell her what I please now, and I warn

you to remember that upon your return from India, I shall expect you to do as I wish you to—marry the one I select for you. You have but an hour to catch the train for Liverpool, and your ship sails to-morrow—and remember, my son, although we are parting now, you to go upon a dangerous service in a far-away land, I am very angry with you."

"I am sorry, father—farewell," and the young man held forth his hand.

The old noble bowed low, refused the offered hand, and with a pale face the son turned away.

The carriage, with its liveried coachman and footmen, was at the door, and around it was drawn a score of servants to waft the young master a good-by and God-speed.

The young officer passed hastily down the line, with a kind word to each, sprung into the carriage, and waved an adieu to his father, who stood stern and unforgiving at the open window.

The old nobleman bowed stiffly, the young man bit his lips, either in anger or sorrow, and the carriage rolled away rapidly toward the station.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LOVERS.

WHEN the train dashed up to the station, the young officer sprung on board and quietly took a seat near the car door.

Half an hour after there was a halt at a small town and the officer stepped out on the platform, called to a waiting carriage, and said quietly,

"Driver, I wish to go down to the wharf."

Ten minutes after the carriage drew up on the wharf, and the officer beckoned to a sailor to approach.

"My man, I wish to charter a trim little craft for a sail of a few days—have you such a vessel?"

"I have, sir—the neatest in the harbor—she was once a gentleman's yacht; and I got her at a bargain, for my trade, sir, which is that of a fisherman; but I have not yet had a scale on board of her."

"Good! when can she be ready?"

"At once, sir."

"Very well, I will accompany you—here, driver, carry this to the telegraph office," and taking his pencil the young man hastily scribbled upon a piece of paper the following lines.

"To Colonel Decatur Melton, Com'dg.—th Dragoons, Steamship Hindoo, Liverpool.

"Am detained; will meet you at mouth of channel. Keep bright look-out for red flag, or red light, at mast-head of small schooner-yacht. MELROSE."

"Be sure that this goes at once, driver, and keep the change. Now, my man, I am ready."

The hackman drove off, pleased with his liberal fee, and the officer followed the seaman to a dock, opposite to which lay a graceful schooner-yacht of thirty tons burden.

"There's the beauty, your honor," and the seaman pointed with pride to his vessel.

"She is a beauty, indeed. Now, get a crew of half a dozen men, and provisions for a week's cruise," and he placed a roll of notes in the hands of the sailor, who at once called to a comrade to row the gentleman on board the yacht, while he departed to get ready for the voyage.

Half an hour afterward the little vessel, under a cloud of canvas, was flying down the coast.

An hour's run, and a point of land, dotted by a large light-house came in sight, and just at sunset the anchor was dropped close in shore.

Upon the beach stood two persons, watching the approach of the vessel—the one, a man of fifty-five, perhaps—dressed plainly in a suit of blue-flannel, and with a face marked with sadness.

At his side stood a maiden of eighteen, neatly attired, and with a face of rare beauty, and a form of yielding grace.

"Father, it is the captain. I felt that he would not sail without seeing us," and as the maiden spoke her face turned crimson.

"You are right, Ada; it is the captain. Let us meet him as he lands."

As the officer sprung ashore he was warmly greeted by both father and daughter; but as soon as the welcome was over, he said earnestly:

"Mr. Lawton, an interview with my father convinces me that he will never consent to my union with your daughter; hence I am determined to act for myself, and have come to ask Ada to become my wife this very hour. A worthy priest lives near you; send for him, and I will make your daughter my bride."

The eyes of the man flashed with secret joy, while the maiden hung her head in confusion.

Then Luther Lawton said slowly:

"You wish this marriage to remain a secret, I suppose, until you desire to make it known?"

"Yes, it is better so. I have bidden my father farewell, and he now believes me to be on my way to Liverpool to join my regiment; but I telegraphed my colonel that I would meet the steamer off the mouth of the channel. Now, Ada, are you willing to become my wife secretly, and on this short notice?"

"Yes."

"Then I will at once hasten and fetch Father Carter. Ada, see the captain into the house," and Luther Lawton, with a great joy at his heart, hurried away, and the lovers were left alone.

That evening, in the cosey little parlor of the light-house, a quiet wedding ceremony was held, and the lovers became man and wife.

In the seclusion of the lonely little home several days passed away in perfect joy to the young couple, and then the young officer bade his beautiful wife good-by, for a long time—perhaps, forever—and embarked on his little yacht to head off the India-bound steamer.

By good luck the Hindoo was sighted a few hours after, and having bribed the crew to secrecy, regarding the voyage of the yacht, the young officer sprung on the deck of the steamer, and was greeted with a loud hurrah from his brother soldiers, for he was the favorite of the whole regiment.

Then, while the little yacht sped back toward the shores of old England, the soldier-laden Hindoo sailed swiftly away for the far-off land of India, then rent with the shock of battle.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BRIBE.

SEVERAL months after the departure of the young officer for India, a liveried carriage drove furiously along the beach-road, leading to the isolated home of Luther Lawton, the light-house keeper.

At the window of her pleasant little home, sat Ada, the young wife, and her face turned pale as she beheld the carriage draw up at the doorway, and the stern old father of her husband dismount therefrom.

"Father, the Earl of Lochiel is at the door—what can he want?" cried Ada, in alarm.

The face of Luther Lawton became livid, and a smothered curse arose to his lips; but he hastily went forward to meet the nobleman, and greeted him at the door.

"Lawton, I have come to see you upon a matter of deep import to you and to me; I would see you in the presence of your daughter," and the Earl of Lochiel spoke sternly, and looked as if both troubled and angry.

"Walk in, my lord—Ada, this is his lordship, the Earl of Lochiel."

Ada bowed low, and the nobleman turned upon her a glance of the closest scrutiny, while he said:

"Lawton, a poor vagabond of a sailor came to me this morning, and made a most startling disclosure, for which, of course, he wishes to be liberally paid."

"And that disclosure, my lord?" quietly said Luther Lawton, while Ada sat as white and still as a statue.

"Was that you and your daughter had enticed my son Melrose into a secret marriage—"

"It is false, my lord—"

"Thank God!"

"Hold, my lord, and do not misunderstand me—I say it is utterly false that my daughter and myself enticed your son into a secret marriage—"

"And I say thank God!"

"Hear me, Earl of Lochiel, your son's life was saved through the courage of my daughter, and between the two there sprung up a friendship that ended in love—nay, more, as you seem possessed of the facts, I will say that ere your son sailed for India, he came hither in a small yacht and was married to my daughter."

"Ah! curses on you, Luther Lawton, for allowing this act of infamy."

"Act of infamy, my lord—explain yourself."

"Do you not know that Melrose is already married?"

It was a hard shot, and poor Ada fell with a cry of despair upon the floor.

Instantly her father sprung toward her.

"Let her lie there, she has only swooned, and now hear me."

The alarmed father obeyed methodically.

"I asked you did you know that my son already had a wife?"

"I do not believe it, my lord."

"Fool that you are—he has dragged your daughter down to infamy, and—"

"Have you proof of this, Earl of Lochiel?"

"What! is my word doubted by you, sir—by you, whom years ago I rescued from shame and dishonor, and can to-day send to—"

"Hold! my lord, for God's sake do not recall my embittered past," cried Luther Lawton, in an agony of grief.

"Then doubt not my word, sir."

For a moment there was silence—the stricken father kneeling by the side of his unconscious daughter, the nobleman cold and stern before him.

At length the Earl of Lochiel spoke, and his tones were strangely stern and determined:

"Luther Lawton, it was your ambition that urged you on to allow this marriage; forgetting the past, you have done me a great wrong, and you should be punished for it, for well you know I hold that against you—which—"

"I know it—spare me, here in the presence of my child," groaned the unhappy man.

"Upon one condition."

"Name it, my lord."

"You love gold, if I remember aright?"

Luther Lawton gave a low moan, and the Earl of Lochiel continued:

"As your daughter is disgraced, she will not care to remain longer here. As your pay here is small, you will desire to better your condition, so I offer you the following terms—leave England at once for America, go at night, go secretly, cover up your tracks, so that none may know where you have gone, and swear that neither you or your daughter will ever make known your whereabouts to my son, and I will now give you five thousand pounds."

"And if I refuse, my lord?"

"I have certain little papers that I will at once place in my attorney's hands."

The man trembled, and then said, slowly:

"Were I not a poor man, Earl of Lochiel—were I alone in the world, I would let you do your worst; but for my daughter's sake I accept your terms."

"And you will at once leave for America?"

"Yes."

"Leaving no trace behind you?"

"I promise."

"You will in no way communicate with my son—you or your daughter?"

"I promise."

"Will you swear it?"

"I swear it."

"Good—with a short while my agent will pay you the money, and to-night I will send my yacht for you. Go on board, and catch the first American-bound vessel, steamer or sailor."

"So be it, my lord."

"If you deceive me I will be revenged, Luther Lawton."

"I will keep my word, sir."

Without another word the nobleman turned away, and the wretched father bent over his still more wretched daughter, who was slowly recovering consciousness.

"Oh, father, was what he said true?" cried the miserable young wife.

"He would scarcely lie to us, Ada."

"Oh, father! let us go far away from here."

"We will, my daughter. We will leave to-night for America, where none know our shame, where none can ever find us. There we will live for each other. Are you better, Ada?"

"Yes, at the thought of going away from here; but my heart is crushed—my life is a blank."

Then nerved to the task before her Ada arose and aided her father in packing up their household effects, and at early dawn the following morning they went on board the Earl's yacht, and on the evening of the same day were in the cabin of a clipper-ship, bound for the port of New York.

CHAPTER VIII.

TOO LATE.

Two horsemen were riding slowly along a broad trail leading from a station on the Overland Stage Route, to Fort Hall.

The one was a pale-face, the other a red-skin.

The white man was mounted on a bay mare of rare beauty, and possessing every indication of speed and bottom.

He was dressed in a suit of buck-skin, wore top boots, a soft black hat, and was armed with a rifle slung on his back, and revolvers and knife in his belt.

His form was tall, agile, and elegant, and his face, reddened almost to the hue of an Indian, was exceedingly handsome.

His companion rode a wiry mustang, with bear-skin saddle and rope bridle—was attired in

the full Indian costume, and carried, besides a long rifle, a pistol, knife, tomahawk, and bow and arrows.

Quietly the two rode along, the Indian slightly in advance, and coming to a small clump of timber they drew rein, as though to halt for rest.

But ere they could dismount there broke on their ears half a dozen wild yells, and up from their concealment sprung as many painted savages—the wild Sioux.

Instantly the white man whipped out a revolver in each hand, drove the spurs into his willing mare, and bounded forward, with but one word upon his lips:

"Come!"

But in vain the effort of the Indian to follow him—the Sioux threw themselves forward, dragged him from his pony, and a glance behind him proved to the white man that his red companion was already dead.

But the savages shrunk back from the ringing revolvers, and the pale-face passed on, a slight wound in his arm from an arrow, and his steed bleeding from a like wound in the neck.

Instantly at his heels came a crowd of pursuers, yelling and firing: but the swift mare distanced them within ten minutes, and the rider kept her at an easy gallop along the broad trail.

Ere sun set the welcome walls of Fort Hall loomed in sight, and riding into the inclosure, the horseman asked to see the commandant.

An orderly at once led him to the rooms of the officer in command, who greeted him pleasantly, at the same time gazing upon him with admiration in his looks.

"Colonel, I have sought you, sir—"

"But you are bleeding, sir—your arm is wet with blood," interrupted the officer.

"A mere scratch, sir—received an hour since from one of your red savages."

"What! have you come alone through this country, and been attacked thus near the fort?"

"No, colonel—I had an Indian guide from a station on the Overland Route—he was killed in an ambush which we rode into—but, sir, I have sought you to make inquiries regarding a large emigrant train, which camped here several weeks ago, and was seeking a spot to settle in this country."

"Yes—they pressed on against my wishes, nay, against my orders, for they said they did not fear the Indians—were well armed, equipped, and had a score of good fighters among them—do you belong to the party?"

"No, sir; but there are those in the train whom I seek—whom I have sought for four years, and only a month ago got on their right track."

"Can I ask who the parties are?"

"Certainly—a gentleman and his daughter—his name was Luther Lawton."

"Yes, I remember him, and especially his daughter and her beautiful child—"

"Her child! Had she a child then?" asked the stranger, with great excitement.

"Yes, a dear little thing, perhaps five years old—and, permit me to say, for I saw much of the child, that she greatly resembled you."

The stranger seemed deeply moved, and for some moments was silent, then he said, in his calm, deep tones:

"Colonel, that was my wife, and my child—six years ago, and a few days after our marriage, I parted from my young bride, and a cruel fate took her from me; but I have tracked her for years, and now, thank God, am near her once more."

"But, sir, they have gone into the country to the north of here—a country trailed by bands of hostile Indians, and you cannot follow them."

"Colonel, were the whole Indian race between me and my wife, I would seek her—a few years ago I served in India against a people whom you will admit are as cruel, if not as cunning, as the American red-skin, and I know something of bush life—besides, I have been a year on your frontier, from Texas to this point—I am superbly mounted, well armed, and after a day or two of rest, will continue on my way."

The colonel felt that he was talking to no ordinary individual, and he at once invited his visitor to remain his guest as long as he desired.

The stranger, whom the reader has ere this doubtless recognized as the young English officer, the husband of Ada Lawton, accepted the hospitality of the commandant for several days, and then, against all remonstrances, departed upon the trail of the emigrant-train, determined to find his lost bride.

For days did the determined man follow the trail, his heart heavy with sorrow, as here and there, at an encampment, he came upon a lonely mound, the last resting-place of some poor

unfortunate who had fallen beneath an Indian's deadly aim.

One evening he entered a lonely valley—a very Eden of beauty, and the trail before him was so fresh that he felt those he sought could not be many hours ahead.

Then his heart gave a great leap of joy—before him he beheld a wagon, and feeding upon the rich grass of the valley was a stray horse.

Spurring forward, his eyes flashing with delight, he suddenly drew rein, then his face became livid, and he reeled like a drunken man in his saddle.

Before him was a wagon it was true; but around it lay half a dozen forms—dead, bleeding, scalped!

One of these forms he recognized as the body of Luther Lawton.

In a frenzy of despair and fury, he rushed on—here his eyes fell upon another wagon, there upon a dead horse, and again upon the mangled body of a man, woman or child.

In wild frenzy, he searched here and there—one loved form was yet concealed from him: but only for a while, as his eyes beheld a white robe, and long golden hair.

In an instant he fell upon his knees beside that form—a bullet wound was in her breast—a long, golden scalp-lock had been torn from her head—the eyes stared wildly at the sky—one arm was clutched closely around a tender form—blood-stained and bedraggled—her child.

It was Ada—his wife—and she was dead!

He had come too late.

With a moan of bitter anguish the strong man fell forward, and consciousness forsook him.

CHAPTER IX

AT BAY.

At a pace as rapid as they could go, with their pack-horses, Lord Gilbert and his party rode on, Pompey and Jake showing great anxiety to lead the retreat.

An hour's ride brought them to the river at a point not very many miles below Yellowstone lake.

Here the beautiful valley widened, with rolling hills, extending back some distance to the main range, and Leo Markham was anxious to press more swiftly on, for, if they were attacked there, they had little chance for protection.

Ever and anon behind them was heard a wild shout, which proved that their enemies were still on their trail.

Toward noon they came in sight of some remarkable looking ledges, of different colored stone, nearly a hundred feet in height, and from fifty to sixty feet apart.

Toward these the solitary trail through the light snow led, and in a short while the little party found a shelter among the friendly ledges, between which coursed a small rivulet.

Here they lost the trail—it went to the very bank of the rivulet, and there it ended.

Where had their mysterious guide gone?

Around them the sheet of snow was unbroken, and their guide had disappeared like magic.

But they had no time to conjecture upon their guide's mysterious disappearance—behind them the cries of their pursuers drew nearer and nearer, coming on, not in their usually noiseless, tireless way, but like baying hounds on the track, a certain sign that they knew the number of their foes, and were confident in their own strength.

"Here we must fight them—that is evident; we have certainly a magnificent position, and our horses can be amply protected, while our rifles and shot-guns will give us plenty of fire-arms."

Leo Markham spoke coolly, and at once set to work to select a position, and prepare for defense.

He felt the desperation of their situation—he knew that the Indians must outnumber them ten to one, or they would not press on as they did; but he also knew well the Indian nature—he had fought them often before—and he was determined to fight them to the bitter end, for surrender to the Sioux was certain death.

In a few moments the horses had been placed in a sheltered position, a kind of rocky chamber in the cliff, and getting out their sporting arms, as well as those they carried for defense, the little party stood at bay.

"Now, Pompey, you and Jake must do your duty—those fellows coming are not ghosts; but they will make ghosts of you if you don't aid us to beat them off. When you fire, don't shut both eyes, and blaze away at the sky; but take good aim and kill every time," and Leo Markham placed the two negroes in good positions, while Lord Gilbert remarked:

"For every Indian you kill, boys, I will give you ten dollars."

"I'm gwine to git rich," said Pompey, bravely, while Jake asked, demurely:

"Ef de dam' Injuns kill me, how much you gwine to gib me, Massa Lord Gilbert?"

"Give you burial—that is all; and if you show the white feather I'll kill you myself," sternly said Jules Vernon.

Both Pompey and Jake felt that they were in close quarters, and at once settled themselves with the determination to do their duty.

"Oh, Lordy! look a-yander!"

It was Jake who spoke, and all eyes turned in the direction in which he pointed.

Was it a wonder that the brave faces of those three white men turned pale, that their fearless hearts throbbed quickly at what they saw?

Out from the shadow of a distant hill, following closely upon their trail, came a large band of mounted warriors, fully two hundred strong.

Was it not madness to attempt resistance against that force?"

It might be, but they would sell their lives dearly.

"Had we only been able to reach Emigrants' Gulch we would be safe. Beyond that point no Indian dare come. They will not intrude into what they superstitiously call the Devil's Home," said Leo Markham.

"I wish we could have reached it; but, as it is, we have but one chance—to fight it out," said Lord Gilbert, quietly.

"We were silly to come with so small a party," returned Jules Vernon.

"It is useless to bewail our errors now, gentlemen; we must fight. See, the Indians are preparing for an attack, for they doubtless know we are hidden here. Fools! do they think a couple of scores of warriors can dislodge us?" and Captain Markham laughed, as he saw a small band of Sioux separate themselves from the main body.

Mounted upon their hardy ponies, the detail of warriors came dashing on toward the ledges, yelling fiercely as they rode.

As if confident of an easy victory, they swept in solid mass, until only two hundred yards separated them from the little party.

"Now! all together! fire!"

As Leo Markham's stern order rung out, five shots pealed forth, and down went several Indians and ponies, for even Pompey and Jake had not thrown their fire away.

Then, in the confusion that followed, the rattling of the repeating rifles was heard, and warrior and pony went down until a dozen lay upon the ground, and the demoralized Sioux turned with wild cries, and rushed back toward the shelter of the distant hills.

"That has taught them a lesson—now they will attack us in full force," quietly said Captain Markham, hastily reloading his matchless Evans's rifle.

It was at once evident that Captain Markham spoke truly. The whole band at once moved out from the hill.

"They are dividing into four parties, and will attack us from as many points simultaneously," said Jules Vernon,

"Yes; that is bad. We must keep them off, or all is lost. If they fail this time to break our line, they will await until night." And turning to the negroes, whose teeth were chattering with fear, Leo Markham continued:

"Boys, you did well before—now do better—ha! here they come."

Like an avalanche the warrior bands swept on, coming from four directions at the same time, and threatening instant death to the little party.

"My lord, I will take the party in our front, you the one on the left, Mr. Vernon the band on the right, and Pompey and Jake, you blaze away at those fellows who are trying to turn our position."

Instantly, at long range, the repeating rifles opened, and, in a number of instances, with deadly effect; but, confident in their numbers, the Sioux rushed on.

Nearer and nearer they came, their wild warcries making the valley echo again, and their hideous faces growing more and more distinct.

"It is useless—they will ride us down; but fight to the last," said Leo Markham, sternly, as the rushing, howling Sioux were now not a hundred yards away.

"Ha! we are surprised! turn and defend yourselves," rung out Captain Markham's stern order, as a score of dark forms bounded into the rocky fortress from behind them.

"Hold! on your lives fire not—it is our guide," he cried, as a slender form, a girl, sprung to his

side, and her clear voice rung out with the cheering cry:

"Banack braves, yonder are your enemies, the Sioux—beat them back!"

CHAPTER X.

THE GIRL GUIDE.

In spite of their very desperate situation, the small party of gallant defenders of the ledges, turned their gaze upon those who had come to their aid so unexpectedly, and especially upon the leader of the grim warriors, who, obeying the ringing order, threw themselves behind every available point of rocks and poured in an unerring fire upon the charging Sioux, now not thirty paces distant.

The crisp cry to the Banack braves came from the lips of a young girl—a maiden scarcely more than sixteen, with a slender form, perfectly molded, and as graceful in every move as a deer.

Her hair hung in luxuriant waves adown her back, and reached below her waist, while a head-dress of bead-work and gay feathers kept it back from her forehead.

Her face was nut-brown in hue, every feature perfect, and fearless determination mingled with its loveliness.

The teeth were perfect, the eyes large, dreamy, and yet full of fire, as they turned upon the advancing Sioux.

Her dress was a tight-fitting bodice of buck-skin, elaborately beaded and worked with stained quills of blue and red; a skirt, reaching to her knees, was fancifully embroidered, and leggings of the finest dressed buck-skin were fringed down the outer seams.

Moccasins were upon her small feet, and about her waist was a sash, ingeniously made of strips of buck-skin dyed various colors.

In this sash were a revolver, of medium size, a knife, and a quiver of arrows, while at her back was slung a long bow, and in her hands, and fired with coolness and precision, was a small, silver-mounted repeating rifle.

Those who had come with her were warriors of the Banack tribe, and hereditary enemies of the Sioux, whom, as a nation, they greatly feared.

They were now not in war-paint, but in hunting trim; but they fought with a desperation begotten by a long hatred of their foes.

Throwing themselves into the front, three-score Banack braves poured in a fire upon the coming Sioux which caused them to recoil for an instant; but with wild cries they again pressed on, and reached the rocky ledge.

Then the whites opened fire with their revolvers, the Banacks with rifles and arrows, and a desperate conflict ensued, for several moments a fierce struggle for mastery.

But suddenly Leo Markham called to Jules Vernon and Lord Gilbert to follow him—as for Jake and Pompey they were nowhere visible.

"Reload your repeating rifles and revolvers, quick! we will take yonder ledge," he cried.

A moment after the three reached the rocky shelf, some thirty feet above the heads of the combatants, and Leo Markham, a little in advance beheld a sight which caused him to quickly fall on one knee and throw his rifle forward.

He was just in time to save the life of the young girl, who would have been braained the next instant by the tomahawk of a huge Sioux chief.

The girl saw from whence the shot came, waved her hand in thanks, sprung to her feet and glided back to the shelter of the ledge.

Then from the rocky shelf the repeating rifles played with terrible effect upon the writhing mass of men and horses, and the Sioux quickly recoiled, staggered back from the ledge, and the Banacks following up the advantage, the boasted rulers of the prairies turned and fled, leaving one-fourth of their number dead and dying behind them.

Long, loud and deep, rung out the triumphant war-cry of the Banacks, and the whites joined with them in their shouts of victory.

As Leo Markham and his companions descended from the ledge, they saw two dark forms creep out of a crevice in the rocks—they were Pompey and Jake, who upon the arrival of the Banacks, had considered their services no longer necessary, and accordingly sought a place of safety.

"You saved my life—I am most thankful to you for it."

Leo Markham started as the soft tones greeted his ears, and a softer hand pressed his arm.

Before him stood the maiden, her earnest eyes turned upon him.

"Do not speak of the little service I did—I would have shot the Sioux anyhow: but to you

we owe our lives, and deeply do we feel all that you have done for us."

The maiden's face flushed, as she said quietly: "I was riding up the valley, saw the Sioux, and coming upon your camp warned you, and guided you hither, the best place I knew of to resist an attack. Then I sought the camp of these brave Banacks, who have been hunting here the past few weeks, and they came with me to your aid."

"And can I ask the name of one who has done us this favor?" and Lord Gilbert gazed with admiration upon the young girl.

"Yes, lady, we would know the sweet name of our fair guide and preserver," remarked Jules Vernon, politely raising his hat.

"Remember me as the girl guide," archly replied the maiden.

"I knew of no settlement in this valley; can it be possible that there is one? and yet there must be, as we find you here," and Leo Markham gazed with increased admiration upon the maiden.

"No, there is no settlement in the Yellowstone—Bartlett's Ranch, below here, is the verge of civilization in this direction—more I cannot tell you—farewell."

As the maiden spoke she bowed, waved her hand, and glided away among the ledges, with a something in her manner that forbade their detaining her longer.

Watching her with interest they saw her enter a small ravine, and the next instant reappear mounted upon the back of a snow-white mustang.

Another wave of the hand and she bounded away and disappeared from view.

Then the disappointed whites turned to the Banacks for further information: but these worthy warriors could tell them little—they belonged to a hunting-party of their tribe, and were encamped in the valley above.

Several times had the maiden been seen by them and they deemed her half-human half-spirit; when she came for them to beat back the Sioux, they had willingly followed her, for they were at peace with their white brothers and gladly aided them—they were happy, for they had whipped the Sioux, gotten many trophies, a few ponies, and plenty of scalps—they would at once go back to their homes in the Gallatin valley.

This was all they knew.

Leo Markham thanked the warriors for their timely service, distributed a few presents among them, and then mounting their horses the party pressed further on, up the Yellowstone, still following the solitary trail of the girl guide, for they were determined to place themselves out of the immediate vicinity of the Sioux, and also to know more of the mysterious maiden who had so cleverly eluded them.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TRAILERS.

SEVERAL days after the fierce battle with the Sioux, a second party encamped for the night upon the very spot where Trapper Dan had lost his life.

It was Burt Belford and his comrades steadily pressing on in the trail of those who had gone before them.

Upon reaching the camp and finding a grave there, it had set them all to thinking—how had Trapper Dan lost his life?

Then the heavy trail of the Sioux band was discovered, and they felt that those whom they followed had been attacked by the Indians.

"If they found no place of shelter, where they could stand a siege, our trip will be useless, captain," said Diamond Dirk, addressing his employer with the above title.

"God grant not. No, it cannot be that Lord Gilbert can die until I meet him. No, he must not die thus. Yet still, they are in great danger, and we must press on," said Burt Belford, with considerable feeling.

"They are doubtless in trouble, sir; if not dead they had but one guide, and there he lies. Captain Markham is as brave as a lion, yet I fear he is not enough skilled in prairie-craft to guide party back. We will camp here to-night, and press on at day-break; but we must keep a bright look-out, or we may lose our own hair," and Diamond Dirk gave orders to two of the men to at once go on a short scout around the camp.

It was not yet sunset, but the horses were fagged out, for they had been pressing rapidly on since early morning, and they at once went into camp, lassoed their animals out to feed, and began preparations for supper.

Through the whole trip thus far, Burt Belford had proven himself a fearless fellow, silent al-

most to moodiness, yet ever kind to his companions.

Toward Diamond Dirk he seemed to be particularly drawn, often asked him about his wild frontier life, and soon discovered that the guide was a man of superior abilities, education, and evidently led the life he did from a love of freedom and daring adventure.

Yet of his early life Burt Belford could not get the guide to speak. He was as silent upon that subject as was he himself regarding his own past, and this but the more increased the interest felt in him.

When, at night, around the camp-fire, Diamond Dirk would break forth in a rich, beautiful tenor, singing some pretty ballad, or snatches from different operas, Burt Belford would draw nearer to him, as if deeply impressed by the song, and longing for a closer friendship between them, there in that frontier land.

From the discovery of the trace of Sioux in their neighborhood, the party had been more watchful, and when Powder Bob came in from his scout and reported that he had followed the trail of the red-skins until he was confident that they were tracking the English party, it caused all to dread the more that a terrible fate had befallen those whom they were trailing.

With the sunset Prairie Pete came hastily into camp, and his news quickly created a stir—he had discovered a large band of Sioux coming down the river, and they were bearing a number of wounded with them—there had evidently been a severe battle above, and if they had captured the whites, or slain them, it was only after a desperate struggle.

Instantly the fire was put out, the horses saddled, and mounting quickly, Diamond Dirk led the way into the timber.

"Guide, we must know what has been the result of the combat—those Sioux will soon camp, and—"

"And I will find out what the result is—we will now seek a camp a few miles above, and then I will strike the trail of the Sioux and follow them to their encampment—they will not go far to-night, loaded as they are with their wounded."

"Can not some of the other men go? I dislike to have you endanger your life—"

"My life is of no more value to me, captain, than is Prairie Pete's to him—risk nothing gain nothing," you know, and I prefer to see for myself this body of Sioux, and if I can get near enough to them to hear their conversation, I shall soon know all that has happened, for I speak their lingo well, and Indians are great people to talk over their deeds, and will have a grand pow-wow around the camp-fire to-night."

Diamond Dirk spoke lightly, yet Burt Belford well knew that he was going to face some terrible danger, and seemed really nervous about his going.

But he knew the character of the guide too well to attempt to dissuade him from his purpose, and simply said:

"If you will insist upon going, do be careful—remember the grave of the other party's guide—Trapper Dan—and let us not have to carve the name of our guide upon a head-board and leave him here in this wild wilderness."

"I shall be careful, captain, and will be back as soon as I can."

So saying, Diamond Dirk mounted his horse and rode slowly out of camp, taking the back trail, and with a sigh, Burt Belford threw himself down to rest upon his blanket.

CHAPTER XII.

DIAMOND DIRK'S ADVENTURE.

AFTER a ride of several miles, Diamond Dirk came upon the broad trail, left by the Sioux band in their retreat down the valley.

Dismounting, he examined the tracks carefully, and then muttered to himself:

"They are on the back track, with heavy hearts, for they carry their dead and wounded—they were handled roughly by Lord Gilbert's party; but how have they fared, I wonder?"

Again mounting, the scout pressed on until the fresh traces of the trail proved to him that those he followed were not far in advance, and in fact, shortly after dark set in, he came upon the glimmer of camp-fires—the Sioux had halted for the night, as Diamond Dirk had supposed they would, but not at the spot where the two parties of pale-faces had encamped, and which was marked by the grave of Trapper Dan.

Here the Sioux arrived just at sunset; halted but an instant; held a momentary excited conversation, and then pressed on for several miles more, until darkness had fully gathered around them.

Concealing his horse in a clump of timber,

Diamond Dirk advanced cautiously on foot toward the Indian encampment, and as noiselessly as a snake crawling through the grass he approached until he was within two hundred paces of the fires, around which were grouped bands of excited warriors, as the scout could see by their gestures, though he could not hear their voices.

"Their sentinels must be near here—ha! yonder stands one against that tree—how easily I could pick him off with my revolver, for he is not twenty paces distant," muttered the scout, and then he scanned the timber upon either side to discover the next Indian guard.

After a long search he discovered the next sentinel to the right, and some fifty paces distant, and one as far off upon the left.

"It's a risky business, but I must do it, for I will then have a chance to creep closer to camp. No, I'll try another game, if it costs me my life!"

The scout spoke in strangely determined tones, and it was evident that he intended some desperate move, for, relieving himself of his rifle and belt of arms, he seized his knife, and again he began moving slowly forward, and in an oblique direction from the position he had lately occupied.

After a long time he gained a point that placed a large tree between him and the Indian sentinel, and then his movements, though exceedingly cautious, were most rapid, and a second's time placed him within arm's length of the red-skin guard, who, little dreaming of deadly danger so near him, was leaning against the tree, his hands crossed upon the muzzle of his rifle.

Around the tree there quickly came an iron arm with a hand that had a clutch of steel, and the red throat of the savage was grasped with a power that prevented all outcry.

Then the other hand of the scout, holding firmly his knife, gave a sudden upward thrust, and the keen blade grated through the ribs into the Indian's heart.

Without a moan the life left the body of the red-skin sentinel, who the next instant lay dead at the feet of his destroyer.

Without a moment's hesitation Diamond Dirk at once threw around him the apparel of the dead Sioux, placed upon his head the eagle-feathers, and walked boldly toward the camp-fires, little over a hundred paces distant.

Approaching to within easy ear-shot, he selected the base of a large tree, and, wrapping his blanket about him, threw himself down to rest, near several other prostrate forms, too tired, or morose, to join in the discussion animatedly kept up around the camp-fires by the greater number of warriors.

Though apparently asleep, the ears of the scout were open to every word he could catch, and almost forgetful of his danger he listened attentively to the different statements of the chiefs, who were telling over and over again the scenes in which they had so lately been actors.

Though the scout knew that a score of eyes had doubtless seen him, yet he felt secure in his disguise for the present, and drank in every word that came from the lips of the savage speakers.

Thus lying there, within the very circle of the Sioux, and supposed by those who had seen him throw himself down to rest, to be one of their number, Diamond Dirk learned how the red-skins, confident in their numbers, had pursued the small party of whites up the valley and driven them to seek shelter in some rocky ledges.

The first charge of a small number of warriors, its disastrous result, and the attack of the entire force, and the coming of the Banacks to the rescue of the pale-faces, the scout also heard told over and over again.

The Banacks he knew were friends of the whites, and he could account for their aiding Lord Gilbert and his party; but here was one thing that Diamond Dirk could not account for any more than the Sioux could, and that was that the Banacks were led by what the red-skins called a *white spirit*.

Though the speakers each seemed to differ in their idea of this spirit, they were all certain of one point—that it was a young girl, and that she bore a charmed life, for no arrow or ball had touched her, and one chief said that his comrade had been near enough to strike the strange being down with his tomahawk, but when he lifted it above his head to deal the fatal blow, he had instantly fallen dead in his tracks.

Diamond Dirk was aware that the Sioux believed the Yellowstone valley haunted by strange spirits, and that 'twas a tradition among

the tribes that a devil lived in the mountains, and he set much of their conversation down to their superstition, yet felt certain that the Banacks had had some strange leader; but, if a young girl, and a pale-face, who and what could she be, he wondered?

Having learned to his satisfaction that Lord Gilbert's party, with the aid of the friendly Banacks, had driven off the Sioux with heavy loss, the scout determined upon retreating from his perilous position.

He accordingly became very restless, tossed about, and muttered in the Sioux tongue, until rising suddenly as though unable to sleep, he folded his blanket about his form and stalked away from the firelight, passing several sleeping forms as he walked along.

Without suspicion he reached the tree where lay the dead sentinel, quietly took the scalp-lock of the fallen brave, and throwing himself again upon the ground, began his cautious retreat to the spot where he had left his rifle and revolvers.

Once more armed with these he glided rapidly back to the spot where he had left his horse, and then halted suddenly, for through the woods rang loud shrieks in a stentorian voice, and the next instant there bounded into view a giant monster—a thing half-human, half-brute, and clad in white, hairy attire.

Waving his long arms above his head, still giving vent to his wild shrieks, the strange creature passed on with the speed of a deer, and disappeared in the darkness.

Once, twice, thrice, the startled scout fired upon the flying form, yet with apparently no effect, and then he quickly mounted his horse and headed back to his own camp, now fully convinced that the Sioux had seen a strange being leading the Banacks, for he had just beheld a being far more weirdlike and wonderful, he felt convinced.

CHAPTER XIII.

LOST.

ALTHOUGH Burt Belford threw himself down to rest, shortly after the departure of Diamond Dirk from camp, he slept but little, for he was most anxious for the safety of his guide.

But when, with the first peep of dawn, Diamond Dirk rode into the encampment safe and sound, Burt Belford was almost boyish in his expressions of pleasure at his return, and cried out:

"Thank God you have come—I feared for your safety."

"I was safe enough, but I am almost starved; Prairie Pete, show your skill now in cooking, for we are in no danger, as the Sioux have retreated from this valley heavy at heart, I assure you, and it is not likely they'll enter it again," said the scout, cheerfully, and Burt Belford rejoined:

"You have seen them, then?"

"Of course; this scalp looks like it, does it not, captain?" and the guide held up the gory scalp-lock of the Sioux sentinel, while all now crowded around to hear what he had to say, for that he had met with some adventure they felt confident.

In a few words the guide then went on to tell how he had struck the trail of the retreating Sioux, saw them halt temporarily at the grave of Trapper Dan, and then push on for a few miles and go into camp, after which he crept upon the sentinel, and then went near enough to hear all that was said by the excited warriors.

When he spoke of the spirit seen by the Sioux, Prairie Pete said:

"I has allers heerd o' sich a critter bein' in these diggin's, an' yer bet she's skeert them Injins purty nigh ter de'th."

Several others of the party also referred to rumors they had heard of strange beings who haunted the Yellowstone valley; but had believed it Indian talk.

"Well, it is *not* Indian talk or superstition, for if I did not see a fair spirit, I saw the Devil himself," said Diamond Dirk, firmly, and he went on to tell of the monster-creature that had rushed shrieking by him, and upon which he had fired several times.

All were astounded at this intelligence; but none doubted it, for they knew Diamond Dirk too well to feel that he had been frightened at a shadow or mistaken a grizzly bear for a human being of giant size.

"I guesses it was the Devil," suggested Prairie Pete, with a glance over his shoulder.

"Devil or not, I'll not leave this valley until I have had a closer acquaintance with the monster," said Diamond Dirk, with determination.

The strange story of the scout had been listened to by all with breathless interest, and yet

none could solve the mystery of the strange being thus discovered, and over the bordermen fell a feeling of superstitious dread that evil would yet befall them.

But Diamond Dirk seemed light-hearted, and after breakfast, the trailers mounted their steeds and pressed rapidly on up the valley.

Before long they came to the battle-field, strewn with its dead—man and beast.

Then they went to the rocky ledges and discovered nearly a dozen graves. Who were beneath those mounds?

That question was quickly answered by Diamond Dick; they were the graves of the slain Banacks—no pale-faces lay beneath.

Where were they? None could tell.

"We will halt here, and scout for discoveries from this point; boys, we will go into camp," said Diamond Dirk.

The frontiersmen instantly set to work, lassoing their horses, and getting ready for dinner, while Burt Belford strolled off alone.

He had been gone but a few minutes, it seemed, when a wild cry, and several pistol-shots were heard in rapid succession.

Seizing his rifle, Diamond Dirk rushed in the direction of the shots, followed by three of the men, while the others hastily set to work to secure the horses and prepare against attack.

A run of a few hundred yards, and Diamond Dick came upon the scene of a struggle; the light snow was trampled down, here and there a crimson stain, and a revolver, with three barrels discharged, lay upon the ground.

The weapon was at once recognized as the property of Burt Belford.

But who had been his antagonist?

None knew, none could tell.

From that spot Burt Belford's tracks were not even to be seen; but there was a trail leading away from the spot—and a strange one.

Huge tracks, heavily made, and fully eight feet apart, led toward a hill, a few hundred yards distant—if made by a human being, he was of immense size, and had been springing, rather than running, over the ground.

Whether man or beast, it was certain that Burt Belford had most mysteriously disappeared with him. With superstitious dread the trailers returned slowly to camp—they would mount their horses and follow that huge trail to the bitter end—they would solve the mystery of their comrade's strange disappearance—they would rescue him or die with him. Such was Diamond Dirk's determination, and in it he was at once seconded by his followers, who he knew would be as true as steel to him.

CHAPTER XIV.

FOUND.

AFTER a hasty meal, Diamond Dirk and his companions took the trail leading away from the ledges, and which they hoped would bring them up with Burt Belford and his captor, whoever or whatever he might be.

Arriving at the hill they found it cut into innumerable ravines, as if it had been raked down with some gigantic rake.

Into the bottom of these gulches or ravines, the snow had not penetrated, and at the mouth of one of them they lost all trace of the trail, the tracks of which up to that point had been the same wide distance apart, as though the person making them had kept up his bounding run.

Separating, each man took a different field of operations, and devoted himself earnestly to the work of finding the lost trail, but after an hour they all returned to the spot where they had left their horses. All but Diamond Dirk—he yet remained absent.

"I guesses as how he's struck a lead, and is follerin' of it," said Prairie Pete.

"Yes; but I hopes as how he won't strike the tarnal critter alone, 'kase he mout git wusted—ther captain wa'n't no chile, an' it seems as how he's bin done for," returned Powder Bob.

"What in durnation's that?" cried another of the scouts.

Instantly all sprung to their feet and listened. For a moment, no sound broke on their ears, and then came a long, distant halloo.

"It's Dirk, boys. Come, we'll git that ther way, you bet."

Hastily the men mounted, and leading the steeds of Burt Belford and Diamond Dirk, they rode rapidly away, in the direction from whence had come the halloo.

A rapid ride of half a mile, and they came to a spot of open country. There in the edge of a clump of timber stood Diamond Dirk, a strange look upon his face.

"Boys, I've found the trail. Here it goes across this open land, and more—I saw who made it," he said, in his quiet way.

"Yer did?" cried several voices.

"Yes. A being half man half grizzly, it seemed. When I first saw him he was bounding away over yonder, *and in his arms he held the captain!*"

"Durnation!" exclaimed Prairie Pete.

"True; but I would not risk a shot and so shouted for you. Now, we will follow him. Come!"

Throwing himself into his saddle, Diamond Dirk dashed away at a swift gallop, followed by his comrades.

Over the shallow snow they pursued the bounding trail, through valley and up and down hillsides, until miles had been left behind them.

Emigrant's Gulch was passed, and then before them were visible vast volumes of white smoke, it seemed.

"Durnation! the earth's on fire, you bet," said Prairie Pete.

"No; we are nearing the geyser region. That is steam from the boiling spring," said Diamond Dirk, and he urged his splendid animal on still faster.

"Ha! yonder is our game. Come!"

They had come to a small hill, and were looking down into a valley.

Half a mile away was a huge form bounding swiftly along.

It was the madman of the Yellowstone, and in his arms he held Burt Belford.

Beyond the valley there arose volumes of white vapor—the steam from the hot lakes—and directly toward this cloudy mass the madman was bounding, with the same mighty, untiring leaps that had marked his trail throughout.

"That thar is the Devil, an' he's makin' tracks for her hell-hole, sartin," said Powder Bob.

"Ef he ain't, I'm a sinner. I say, boss, we'd better let that thar rooster alone—he's ther Devil," called out Prairie Pete to Diamond Dirk.

"Come on, you fools! if he gains yonder smoke we will lose him," called back the guide, as he bounded on.

"We wants ter lose him, we does—don't we, boys?" said Powder Bob.

A universal assent followed. They would fight anything human; but when it came to the Devil himself, that was another question, and they came to a halt and called loudly to their comrades to return.

But Diamond Dirk was of a different metal—he feared nothing earthly or unearthly, and urged his steed swiftly on in pursuit.

It then became a hot race, and the horseman steadily gained upon the fugitive: but a few more tremendous bounds carried the madman into the mists, arising from the boiling springs, and he disappeared from view.

The next instant Diamond Dirk drew rein, suddenly—forcing his steed back upon his haunches—he was upon the brink of a rocky basin, from which was hurled into the air hundreds of tons of boiling water, which fell back to the earth with heavy thuds that shook the rocks and gave forth a roar like thunder.

Slowly, up and down the spot, did Diamond Dirk ride, forcing his steed even into the hot mists; but nowhere could he see aught of the monster fugitive—he had disappeared most mysteriously—perhaps rushed to his death in the seething caldron of water.

Then the guide slowly retraced his way toward his comrades, who still stood on the distant hill watching him most anxiously.

As he rode along, his quick and experienced eye caught sight of a trail in the snow, winding along the base of the hill.

Beckoning to his comrades to follow, he struck the fresh tracks, and soon discovered that he recognized them.

Finding that they were not going in the direction of the infernal regions, as they called the boiling lakes, the companions of the guide hastily overtook him.

"Well, boys, I chased the Devil home—but poor Captain Belford, I fear he has gone to his death; see, I've struck a new lead."

"Yas, it looks like the old trail."

"It is the one we were following, and it is fresh—we will go into camp near here, and then solve this mystery, for I will find the captain, dead or alive," and the guide spoke with a determination that proved that he meant all that he said.

"I fears as how you has ter go ter hell ter do it, an' it is poooty bad fur a nice young man, as was the capt'in, to hev ter go ter the devil, so suddint-like; but he's got him sure."

"Not so bad as that, Pete, I hope; but there is certainly some great mystery in all this—that fellow was the same one that fled by me when I

was returning from the Sioux camp, and I hope he has a lair some where here—see, the party that left this trail is not far ahead of us," and the guide pointed to a distant clump of timber, above which curled up a column of blue smoke.

A mile more, and they saw men and horses through the timber.

"That is the party we are looking for—yonder is Captain Markham."

"Yas, we've found them," replied Prairie Pete.

"An' hev lost ther man as was lookin' fur 'em," answered Powder Bob.

"Yes—lost the one who was searching for those whom we have now found; but I hope all will come round right in the end—yet I fear for the captain," and the guide's voice was full of sadness, for he had become deeply attached to Burt Belford in the time th'v had been together.

CHAPTER XV

IN A QUANDAR

WHEN the party of Diamond Dirk had first been discovered, Lord Gilbert and his companions at once placed themselves on the defensive, while Pompey and Jake sought secure hiding-places.

But Leo Markham soon discovered that they were all white men, and, shortly after, recognized Diamond Dirk, whom he had often seen at the fort.

"They are friends—yes, I know them all: but what can have brought them here?"

"Doubtless heard the firing yesterday, and have followed our trail," suggested Lord Gilbert.

"It would be just like Diamond Dirk to come to the aid of those in distress, yet I cannot understand what can have brought them into the Yellowstone region—had they been a scouting party from the fort I would have known of it; but we shall soon know—Ho! scout; we are glad to see you: but what brings you here?" cried Leo Markham.

"We have found what we came for, captain, and I am glad to meet you, as we were in search of you," and Diamond Dirk threw himself from his horse and grasped the soldier's hand.

"Anything wrong at the fort?"

"Oh no—our business is unofficial—in fact I do not know what it is: but we came as a body-guard to—to—what in thunder is his name? boys do you remember the captain's name?"

"Nary—never heerd, as I knows on," replied Pete.

"Strange, I should have forgotten it: but to explain—shortly after you left the border, a young gentleman rode into town—there's his horse—and asked for a guide and men to follow you—he was most anxious, for some reason or other, to meet with Lord Gilbert."

"With me?" and the Englishman stepped forward.

"Yes, sir—he said he would go to the ends of the earth to meet you, and hence we started on your trail."

"And where is he now?"

"God only knows—we camped at your old battle-field early this morning, and he walked off alone—shortly after three shots were heard in rapid succession, and we ran to his aid."

"The ground and snow were trampled and bloodstained, and but one trail led from the spot."

"That trail we followed, and an hour since came in sight of the boiling lakes, and the fugitive, a monster, human-shaped and of great size."

"The madman!" cried Leo Markham, and then he quickly continued: Go on, guide, I have met the same monster."

"He carried in his arms, as though a mere child, the captain, and disappeared in the mists not a hundred yards ahead of me—whether to die in the boiling waters, or into some den known to him alone, God only knows, for I could find no trace of him."

"And you say this man was in search of me?"

"Yes, sir."

"And for what reason you cannot tell?"

"No, sir—he gave no reason—only seemed most anxious to find you."

"And you cannot recall his name?"

"For the life of me, I cannot: I heard it out once, and we only called him captain."

"Was he an officer?"

"That I do not know, sir—I learned nothing of him, excepting that he was not an American and had traveled much."

"Describe him, please," and Lord Gilbert seemed deeply interested and greatly puzzled.

"He was a slender-formed, agile man of

twenty perhaps—possessed an almost womanly face, and seemed of a rather sad nature.

"He was well mounted, well armed, rode passably well, was utterly fearless of danger, and most liberal with his money, for he gave me ample to fit out for the trip."

"A mere boy, you say?"

"In looks, yes, yet not in manner—he looked twenty, he acted forty—he was a fine fellow, and I liked him immensely."

"This indeed is remarkable—I can think of no one whom I can place in his position—can you Jules?"

"None—a friend would hardly have gone to such trouble, expense, and danger to find you," replied the Frenchman.

"And I know of no man who would track me thus from hatred—there is a deep mystery in all this."

"So it seems—this land is full of mysteries: but now that I am here I am determined to solve some of them."

"From the Indians I learned that you were aided in your fight, by an angel—"

"Ha, ha; and so she was, guide—a pretty little sunburnt angel in buck-skin petticoats—she led us out of danger, to a good place for defense, and then, when we were about to be wiped out, brought some Banack braves to our aid—"

"I was surprised to know that there were Banacks up here?"

"Yes—a hunting-party—but they did not come above Emigrant's Gulch; we left them at the battlefield and came on here after the angel, following her trail to this piece of timber," said Captain Markham.

"Was she an Indian?"

"Oh, no; but nearly as brown as one—she was a beautiful girl, and when she had saved our lives, slipped through our fingers as nicely as you please—but she leaves a trail, and hence cannot be an angel."

"And dwells in close vicinity to the Devil's dominions, captain," and Diamond Dirk pointed toward the vapory clouds from the boiling lakes.

Then he continued:

"Well, this is another mystery that needs solving—an angel to be found, the Devil to be captured, and our captain rescued. We will at once seek a pleasant and safe camp, and set to work."

"Agreed. I am delighted that you have come, and our united parties need not fear Indians. Lord Gilbert, my friend Diamond Dirk is the crack scout of the border—we are lucky to have been found by him. Now let us at once seek a permanent camp—the horses are jaded and need rest—then to rescue your friend from that madman's power—first insnare the Devil, and we will then be worthy to entrap an angel. Guide, whither shall we go?"

Diamond Dirk glanced quietly around him, and soon took in the nature of the country.

Then he mounted his horse, and followed by the whole party, set off for a distant range of hills.

An hour's ride brought them to a most delightful and secure retreat for an encampment, with plenty of rich grass for the horses, cool running streams filled with delicious trout, and the timber the haunt of big and little game.

Here the tents were soon pitched, a rustic cabin built, the horses hopped and turned out to feed, and Pompey and Jake, grown brave with numbers, set to work with a will preparing a substantial meal.

From that point the party were to begin solving the mysteries of the wonderful and beautiful land of the Yellowstone.

CHAPTER XIV.

DIAMOND DIRK TRAILING.

AT an early hour that night the whole party retired to rest, excepting Powder Bob and Prairie Pete, who were on guard.

Diamond Dirk, worn out with his loss of rest and fatigue, was sleeping peacefully; but a slight touch aroused him at once to wakefulness.

"Well, Pete, what is it?" he asked, for the plainsman bent over him.

"That's what I wants ter know."

Diamond Dirk hastily threw on his clothes, buckled his belt of arms around him, seized his rifle, and walked noiselessly from the brush cabin, or rather shelter.

"Well?"

"I'll tell yer—I was on the outpost yonder, an'durn me, ef I didn't see ther Devil—he passed right by me."

"Was it the same fellow we trailed?"

"Yas—or his brother; he was trottin' along, an' went down that way," and Prairie Pete pointed toward the boiling lakes.

"Very well, I will follow him; the moon is rising, the snow is crusty, and I can trail him easily."

"I don't like ter see yer go alone, pard, an' I'm durned ef I wants ter go with yer—let me git some other feller as isn't as wicked as I is, some one as ther Devil don't want as much as he do me—say Captain Markham—he'll go to hell with yer, an' he's kinder acquainted with them Devil, yer know."

"No, I will go alone—I hope to be back by breakfast; keep a bright look-out, Fete, and call out if you see anything suspicious."

"I will, pard, and God bless yer, ef yer is goin' inter the Devil's company."

Diamond Dick laughed lightly—then took the trail of the being who had found Pete's beat—it was the same track he had followed the day before.

Where would it lead him now?

That, he was determined to see, and at a swift pace he sped along, the crisp snow cracking beneath his feet.

As he had expected, the trail led him directly toward the boiling spring.

The roar of the falling waters was before him, and as he drew nearer the ground trembled beneath his feet—the mists boiled up into the air in volumes, and the hiss of the seething caldron was distinctly heard, while the moonlight fell upon all, and brought to his mind the thought that he seemed indeed to be approaching a very Hell on earth.

Straight toward this spot the trail led, until the heat of the steam melted the snow, and the tracks were no longer visible; but, undaunted, the brave scout pushed on, and entered the blinding mists.

Feeling before him, with a stick he had picked up in the timber, he went forward to the very brink of the boiling lake.

For an instant he stood there, the hot spray falling in showers upon him, and then he moved slowly to the right.

Cautiously he advanced, until the roar of the falling waters proved to him that he was passing between two of the boiling caldrons.

"Ha! I am making a discovery," he muttered, and he again moved forward, until gradually the mists were less dense and cooler, and after awhile he passed out from the vapor into open air.

Behind him, and to the right and left rose volumes of misty clouds, and before him was a high, abrupt, and rocky hill.

Like a crescent, with each point against the hill, circled the boiling lakes, or basins, and Diamond Dick did not doubt but that he had passed through the half-circle of boiling springs by the only passage that existed.

"Now I am in Satan's dominions, I must find out if his majesty is at home," he muttered grimly, and he walked straight forward toward the rocky hill.

It rose to a height of two hundred feet, was some half that number of yards in width, and over its summit tumbled a small stream, falling into a huge bowl at its base.

To this bowl, or basin, there seemed no bottom, for the waters poured down into the earth with an almost deafening roar.

The face of the cliff was broken here and there with ravines, and gliding into one of these Diamond Dick found a comparatively easy way of ascending the rocky hillside.

He had gone up about half the distance, when he came suddenly upon shelf of rock, the background of which was an entrance to a cavern—dark, dismal, and forbidding, it looked.

"Here is the Devil's den—now to enter and see who I am to meet," and the scout drew a box of matches from his pocket.

"Too bad, too bad—the steam has dampened them," he said, as match after match failed to ignite.

"I dare not go in in the dark—I will push my discoveries outside, and leave this cavern for tomorrow."

So saying, Diamond Dick looked around for some path leading further up the cliff.

To the left of the cavern he found a narrow shelf, scarcely more than a foot in width, leading up the rocky wall.

This path led him beneath the falling torrent, and into a small cave, as high as his head, but very narrow; but he saw light ahead and pushed on and soon came out upon a thicket covered hillside—above him towered higher hills, below him lay a small valley, beautiful in the moonlight.

"Well, I have found two ways of getting into his Satanic majesty's abode—now for camp," and he struck off at a lively gait down the hill-side.

Turning into the valley he began to circle around the hills, at the same time bending in the direction of the encampment, when he heard the rapid clatter of hoofs.

Instantly he bounded into the shelter of a convenient thicket, and awaited.

Who could it be—this midnight rider?

Or could the steed be riderless?

Such were his thoughts; but he would see what more mystery the Yellowstone was to display.

The next instant a horse swept into sight, and almost upon him.

A horse and a rider—that much he saw, and a heavy cloud swept across the moon and darkness came.

With a bound Diamond Dirk sprung forward, one hand outstretched to catch the bridle rein—the other presenting a revolver, while there was upon his lips a cry for the horseman to halt!

But as his hand clutched the rein, as his pistol was raised, as his lips parted with the stern order to halt—there came a blow upon his head, and Diamond Dirk fell heavily to the ground, while the horse and rider passed on.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WARNING.

WHEN Diamond Dirk recovered from the stunning effects of the blow he had received, the moon had paled before the light of day.

As consciousness slowly came back to him he felt almost another presence near him—his eyes seemed to open upon a form at his side.

But when his scattered senses fully returned, and he raised himself to a sitting posture, he was all alone.

Yet his head was wet, as if saturated with water—and more—a bandage was about his forehead.

Hastily removing the bandage he felt a gash in his head, a cut over the left temple—it had bled freely, a small pool of blood was upon the ground; but it had been carefully dressed.

By whom? was the question that floated through the scout's yet dizzy brain.

Then he glanced around him—his pistols and knife were at hand, his matchless rifle lay by his side.

Who had been the one whose capture he had attempted?

Certainly a most generous foe, he thought.

Then his eyes fell upon a small stick, one end in the ground, the other containing a piece of white paper.

Instantly he seized it.

It was a leaf from an old note-book, and upon it, written in a bold, yet feminine hand, was the following:

"One who has your good at heart warns you to at once depart from the Yellowstone—you and your friends.

"I saved them once, and in return they followed my trail, and have now come further into this unknown and mysterious land—for I know where you are encamped.

"And one other knows who will drag you all to death—he is on your trail, and I warn you, for he knows no mercy.

"You attacked me; but ere you sprung from your covert I was warned of danger by my horse, and I struck you down—I am glad that you are not hurt seriously.

"Take my warning, you and your friends, and leave this valley, where only death awaits you.

THE GIRL GUIDE.

Diamond Dirk read this warning over twice, and then placed it away in an inner pocket.

"You do not know me, fair girl; the greater the danger, the more I risk it; the greater the mystery, the more determined I am to solve it. I will yet track you to your Eden, fair angel!"

So muttering, the scout arose and slowly continued on his way back to camp.

An hour's walk and he arrived, to find all astir and most anxious about him; in fact, Lord Gilbert and Powder Bob had gone off in search of him.

In a few words, Diamond Dirk told of his strange adventures, and exhibited the warning missive he had received.

"She was as quick as lightning—struck me down before I could seize her bridle-rein. I'll yet track that girl to her home; but who or what she can be I cannot tell. Now, I must get some rest, for I am used up," and Diamond Dirk threw himself down upon his blankets.

Late in the afternoon he was awakened by loud voices, and springing to his feet, he found that Lord Gilbert had just returned, and Powder Bob was not with him.

The Englishman was pale and haggard looking, and his story was soon told.

They had gone to the springs in search of Diamond Dirk, had entered the misty clouds side by side, and suddenly he had missed Powder Bob.

In vain had he called to him—in vain had he searched for him; nowhere was he to be found.

Then, after hours of struggling, he had at last found his way out, weak, wearied and sorrowing for the loss of his companion, and after some time had discovered the way back to camp.

"He was by your side, my lord, you say, when you entered the vapor?" asked Diamond Dirk.

"Yes—not two feet from me."

"Then he has fallen into one of those seething caldrons and instantly perished, or—"

"Or what, scout?"

"Has been seized by the madman and carried off. Poor Bob! I hope we will yet find him; but already the warning of the girl guide is being fulfilled—Trapper Dan, the captain, and now Powder Bob. It is too bad, too bad.

"Who will follow me to that madman's cave?"

"I, for one," said Leo Markham.

"And I, for another."

"I also," said Lord Gilbert and Jules Vernon in a breath.

"I'd like to be in at ther death o' ther devil, but I ain't ther boy to go an' look him up," said Prairie Pete, and it was evident that his superstitious comrades agreed with him.

"We are enough, Pete; four of us can certainly overcome one man, giant though he be. Now, let us be off, for we have no time to lose," and Diamond Dirk set about his preparations for the dangerous work before him.

Half an hour after the four men set out, and soon disappeared in the misty clouds at the boiling springs.

They went close together in Indian file, with Diamond Dirk in the lead.

Coming out into the opening soon, for the guide had led the way unswervingly, they crossed the space, entered the ravine and ascended the steep side of the cliff.

At length the shelf was reached, and with his rifle ready, Diamond Dirk stepped into the open cavern.

But he started back with a cry of horror.

Across the opening, a deep knife-wound in his side, lay Powder Bob—dead.

"Poor Bob—he has gone—who next?" said the guide, and he sprung fearlessly over the dead body and entered the cavern.

Around him was a rocky room. Once perhaps it had been the monster's abode; now it was empty, and the dead body left to guard the entrance.

The weapons of the slain man were gone, and he lay stark and cold—a frenzied expression upon his bold face.

"He has slain him and fled. Come, we will bear poor Rob away and bury him.

"To-morrow I will lay for this monster and kill him, or he will kill me."

So saying, the scout raised the dead body, and aided by Leo Markham, bore it slowly back to camp, where their arrival but added to the superstition of the bordermen, and scared Pompey and Jake almost out of their wits.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MADMAN AT BAY.

A STRANGE-LOOKING being dragged himself, brute-like, out of a thicket, where he had been sleeping upon a mossy bank.

He was of herculean build, fully seven feet tall, broad-shouldered, full-chested, and displayed in legs, arms and body wonderful muscular development—in fact, he was a very giant.

His hands were large, bony, and armed with long nails, almost grown into claws—his feet were immense, and incased in bear-skin moccasins, while his body was robed in the skin of a grizzly bear, the hairy side out, which gave him a brute-like appearance.

Upon his head was a huge bear-skin cap, from beneath which hung masses of unkempt, iron-gray hair, reaching to his waist, while a beard, coarse, gray, and matted, touched his belt, in which was stuck a single weapon—a long-bladed knife.

Peeping out from the masses of hair over his left shoulder, was a bark quiver, containing a score of long, graceful arrows, while in his hand he held a bow, nearly as long as himself, and which served as a staff as well as a weapon.

Shaking himself together, the man glanced around him, the sunlight falling full in his wild, haggard face.

The brow was massive, yet a wreck, the eyes

cunning, deep-set, and full of restless fire, the other features good, yet stamped with a look of fierce despair.

Altogether he was a magnificent specimen of manhood—yet his brain was gone—he was mad.

Suddenly from his lips burst a wild yell—half shriek, half howl, and his eyes became fixed upon an object moving through a thicket near by.

A moment after the object came in view—a bear of the largest size.

With an angry growl the man strode forward to meet the beast—it was his nature to kill, and he knew no fear.

The bear at once prepared to meet his human foe half-way—raised upon his hind feet, and with a fierce howl of rage extended his huge paws.

But the madman was as cunning as was the brute—he evaded the rough embrace, sprung nimbly into the air, and came down with terrific force upon the bear's head.

Down went bruin, and as he fell the keen blade of the madman crunched into his side.

Then the two clutched in the death-grapple—the bear wounding the man with his sharp claws, the man driving his knife again and again into the brute.

At length the bear weakened—the blood flowed in streams from his wounds, and the madman staggered to his feet, his triumphant yell breaking forth and ringing through the valley.

But he reeled like a drunken man—the blood streamed from innumerable cuts in face, arms, and breast—he had met a monster brute, and though he had subdued him, bitter had the triumph been.

For a moment he seemed as if about to swoon away—perhaps to fall and die; but he recovered himself, and bent his ear to listen.

There was a sound of crashing twigs, angry growls, and then came from the thicket a she bear—the mate of the slain monster.

At her feet trotted two cubs—too small to be dangerous, large enough to do mischief.

The eyes of the new-comers fell upon the crimson-stained body of the dead brute—then turned upon the slayer, and cries broke from her the gleaming jaws of the mother and cubs.

But the madman moved not—his was not a nature to fly, though he was as swift of foot almost as a deer.

An unearthly yell broke from his lips, and he met his foes half-way—he had slain one brute, he would meet those that remained.

Maddened with rage and sorrow, the bear rushed upon her foe, and as she seized him in her powerful arms, the two cubs gnawed and tugged at his feet.

But, with a strength that was marvelous, the madman seized her by the throat, and held her at arm's length, while his cruel knife was buried savagely into her hairy hide.

A keener bite than usual upon his leg caused the giant to raise his foot, and with telling force it fell upon one of the cubs.

A stifled howl, a crushing of bones, a burst of blood from mouth and nostrils and that little bear died young.

But the mother was not as easily conquered—the gleaming knife had dealt her savage blows, but not yet had it reached a vital part, while the remaining cub still tugged at the muscular legs of his foe, until he was knocked out of breath and time by a savage kick of the huge foot of the giant.

Then the madman clutched more closely his brute antagonist, and, as if to end the struggle, by a gigantic effort, hurled her to the ground.

Over and over upon the greensward, scattering the earth, plowing up furrows, staining the grass, growling, shrieking, giving and receiving blows the man and brute struggled, fought, writhed on—each growing weaker, but the man's strength failing him more rapidly than the bear's; but he was human, though a giant and a madman—he had just had one terrible combat and conquered—could he be victor in a second encounter equally as terrible?

Perhaps the brute recognized that her foe was failing, for her blows became more savage, and her growls of rage fiercer.

A few more moments and she would be the victor—and still more, the stunned cub was rallying and coming back to life.

But a clatter of hoofs was heard, a slender form sprung to the ground from the back of a snow-white mustang; a pistol cracked, and with a yelp the cub tumbled over dead.

Then the form glided up to the writhing combatants and a chance soon offered and a bullet of lead pierced the brain of the brute.

The hairy arms relaxed at once, the blood

stained mouth ceased its fierce growls, the eyes of fire dimmed and the savage beast was dead.

The brute dead, and the madman, more mechanically than with strength and thought, still raising his bloody knife, and endeavoring to drive it into his enemy.

"The bear is dead—come, unloose your hold, and let me care for you—you need it badly."

It was the girl guide who spoke.

But her words fell upon deaf ears—the madman had swooned away—or, was dead, which, the maiden did not know.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DEVIL AND THE ANGEL.

WITH a strength that one would not believe possible, the girl guide dragged the form of the giant madman into a comfortable position, placing his head and shoulders upon the body of his late brute foe.

Then, with the skill of a surgeon, she set about dressing his numerous wounds, binding them up with bandages torn from her own clothing, and bathing them with water, brought in a skin pouch that hung to her saddle, from a brook not ten paces distant.

When the bleeding was stopped, and the wounds dressed, the girl guide bathed the haggard face, and head of the madman, and then poured water between the tightly closed teeth.

For the first time the madman now began to show signs of returning consciousness—his frame quivered, his lips twitched, and a kind of growl came from between his shut teeth.

A few moments more and his eyes opened—at first with a wild savage stare—then they softened, while he said in his hoarse voice.

"Who are you?"

"One who has aided you—I found you struggling with a bear and ended the fight."

"Yes, I remember—you saved my life?"

"Yes."

"You have done wrong—it had been better had I died—I am mad."

This was said with an inexpressible sadness of tone, and it touched the maiden's heart, for she said softly:

"No—it is better as it is: but you are sorely hurt—you need rest and care: my pony is small but strong, he will bear you to your home—"

"Home—I have no home—the valleys, the mountains, the crevices of the rocks, the sunny prairies, are my home—the birds only are my friends, they sing me to sleep, they waken me to the world—once I had a home: but that was long ago—long ago—"

"But you have some place of abode—I have seen you often go toward the boiling springs."

A look of cunning came over the man's face—he would not trust even her.

After awhile he said.

"I have seen you too—you are an angel and I would not disturb you—nor yours—I have never trailed you—I have seen you fit along the valley and over the hills by night and by day: others are my game—cruel men who have ever been my foes—they maddened me—red and white alike: but I have been avenged—ay, I have been avenged—"

"I am but a simple girl—you will do as I wish—come, snow-cloud."

The white mustang trotted up to the side of his mistress, obedient to her call.

"Come, you are not able to walk—mount Snow-cloud, and he will bear you—will you do as I wish?"

"Yes."

With difficulty the man arose, placed his knife in his belt, and then mounted the mustang, who seemed impatient at his heavy load.

With slow step the mustang moved away, the Girl Guide following, and the madman directing the way.

A mile was thus gone over, and the rider turned up the side of a high hill, dotted with great rocky boulders.

Near the summit the madman drew rein—stepped slowly to the ground, and said simply:

"Come."

"Stay here now, Snow-Cloud, I will soon return," and with a caress the maiden followed.

The giant glided between two large rocks, ascended a number of artificial steps, and came to a cavern entrance.

Behind and below them was a grand view of valley, hill, river and distant lake, but the madman entered, and the Girl Guide followed in the dim obscurity.

A moment after they came out on a rocky shelf—it looked down upon the boiling lakes—it looked down upon the cavern which Diamond Dirl had found; but it was far above all.

At the other end of this rocky shelf was a cave,

and without a word, and staggering from weakness, the giant entered it.

Then the Girl Guide found herself in a rocky castle—corridors led hither and thither, and chambers of various size were upon either hand, while, by some means, a quiet light fell into the beautiful cavern, doubtless through apertures in the rocky sides.

One of these chambers was the abode of the madman—it was his mountain home.

Clubs, a few knives of various sizes, a rifle, bows and arrows, bear, elk and wolf-skins, adorned the walls, while a bed of furs occupied one corner.

A rudely-made box, contained a quantity of dried meat and fish—his only food.

This was the madman's home—the fit abode for one almost as wild as the wild beasts who roamed the forests.

But the young girl showed no surprise—she said simply:

"Lie down on your bed, and I will return ere long and bring you something that will make you more comfortable; now keep quiet."

The man silently obeyed, and the Girl Guide left the cavern.

Two hours she was gone, and then she returned, bearing with her a heavy bundle.

She quickly unrolled it, and from its contents at once set to work to redress the man's wounds, after which she gave him some food she had brought with her.

"Now there is water for you, and you have food within reach, so do not move from here.

"To-morrow I will return and see you again—now I must leave you."

"You have been good to me—no one has been good to me for long years; but there is one other I would have you care for—one who is wounded and must not die until the moon is full."

"One other! have you a companion?" asked the maiden, in surprise.

"I have one whom I brought here—here to my home; sometimes I think I am the devil and that this place is hell—my home; but it cannot be hell, for angels do not go to hell, do they? and you are here."

"No, this is your home—you have had sorrows that have driven you from your fellow-men—think no more of it; but who is this other one that you speak of?"

"Go on through that rocky passage, keep to the right, and you will find the one of whom I speak."

The fearless maiden at once obeyed. She followed the rocky passage-way until she came to a large and pleasant chamber. It had two openings, and by the light that streamed in, she saw a form lying upon a bed of skins.

"Have you come to save me?" said a faint voice.

"Yes; the madman said I would find a human being here who needed aid."

"I do—I am wounded—almost dying; I have expected to die. But where is the madman?"

"In his cave, and badly wounded. He had a terrible fight with savage bears; but how came you here, and who are you?"

"The madman seized me near my camp, some days ago. I did not see him until he was upon me, and in trying to fire upon him I wounded myself. I came here, with others, to see a man whom I will track to the ends of the earth. I feel now that I will not die until I have met that man face to face."

"Who are you?" again asked the girl.

"My name is Burt Belford, and the madman has said I shall die. See, I am bound hand and foot, and the madman has said that I shall die when the moon is full."

"You shall not die; I will save you: keep up good heart, for I will soon return with one who will take you from here."

So saying, the maiden retraced her way to the other cavern chamber.

The madman was asleep, and she glided softly out of the cave, sought her steed, and mounting in haste sped away like the wind, her face all aglow with excitement.

CHAPTER XX.

SEEKING AN ALLEY.

WHEN the Girl Guide rode away from the madman's cavern, she wended her course toward the encampment in the canyon.

As she drew near the camp, she rode more slowly, and her eyes were earnestly bent upon the timber ahead of her.

She had barely entered the woodland when a tall form stepped out from behind a tree and confronted her.

Snow-Cloud bounded quickly away; but a strong pull upon the rein and a word from the maiden restrained him, and once more she faced

the one who had so unexpectedly appeared in her path.

"I was seeking you, sir."

It was Diamond Dirk before her.

"Seeking me? how strange! I just left camp to endeavor to find you."

"Why?"

"To ask your aid. I intended to strike your trail and follow it until I found you. Now that I have found you, let me thank you for a kindness done me."

"When?"

"When I was hurt, and—"

"I struck you down. I did my duty only in dressing the wound I had made. But how can I serve you?"

"You know the madman who haunts this valley?"

"Yes—I have just left him."

"Is he aught to you?"

"He is a human being—though mad."

"Do you live with him?"

"Oh, no—I have seen him often: but always feared him. This morning he was nearly killed in a fight with grizzlies, and I arrived in time to save his life, and he is now in his cavern in yonder hill—I left there to come here and tell you that he has a prisoner with him."

"Ha! a young man?"

"Yes—a young man, and he is wounded—he says his name is Burt Belford."

"Thank God! it is the captain."

"He accidentally wounded himself in trying to kill the madman: but the giant bore him in his arms to his cavern, and is keeping him there, intending to torture him when the moon is at its full, for the poor, crazy being believes himself at times to be the Devil."

"Is the captain badly mounted?"

"I think not—he was bound hand and foot: but I severed his bonds and came to inform you—he must be rescued."

"Assuredly, and at once—I will go with you—wait until I return to camp for my horse."

So saying, Diamond Dirk, in a long, swinging Indian trot, started for the encampment.

Twenty minutes he returned, accompanied by Leo Markham, whom he presented to the Girl Guide.

Then the three set out for the cavern of the madman.

It was sunset ere they arrived at the vicinity of the cave; but the young girl was a perfect trailer and soon stood in the entrance to the cavern."

"I will first enter and see if he sleeps—if so, you can glide through into the inner chamber."

So saying the girl entered the cavern—to return in a few moments and tell her companions to follow her.

"He is, I think, delirious with fever—come."

Quietly she led the way, and passed through the rocky chamber, from whence came the hoarse sounds of the maniac's voice, mumbling to himself.

Having thoroughly learned the bearings of the inner galleries and chambers, the girl led the way without hesitation, and then halting, lighted a match.

They were in the rocky chamber in which lay Burt Belford.

At the flash of the light he awoke and his eyes fell upon the tall elegant form of Diamond Dirk.

"You have come to save me—I am so glad," he said, in a weak voice.

"Yes—this brave girl has brought us to your aid—are you able to move?"

"Ah, yes; but I am very weak—I have lost much blood—and I am almost starved."

"You will soon be well, now; come, we will carry you—this is Captain Markham with me, an officer from Fort Ellis."

Gently the two raised the wounded man in their arms, and again led by the maiden, moved noiselessly and slowly from the inner cave.

As they passed through the cavern of the madman his voice grew louder and hoarser, and he moved restlessly about upon his bed.

But they passed rapidly through, gained the open air, and were congratulating themselves upon their lucky escape, when a fierce howl of rage came from the cavern.

"Quick! Markham, carry him on to the horses, mount and ride to camp—I will hold him at bay," cried Diamond Dirk.

Leo Markham siezed Burt Belford in his strong arms and bounded away: but the Girl Guide turned toward the scout:

"Ah, sir, do not kill him—he is a poor madman."

"I will not, except in self-defense—quick, fly on after the others, and go at once to camp—I will follow soon."

The girl glided away, and Diamond Dirk turned to meet the madman, whose cries told him he was coming rapidly on their trail—whether conscious of the flight of his prisoner, or in mad frenzy, he could not tell.

A moment more and the giant-maniac halted suddenly—he saw an obstacle in his path.

It was bright starlight, and each man distinctly saw the other—the one crouched, rifle in hand, upon one knee, the other towering boldly erect, as savage as a brute.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MADMAN'S STORY.

For an instant the frenzied maniac paused, and the two men glared at each other—the one all excitement with rage—the other calm and fearless.

"Who are you?" howled the maniac.

"One who means you no harm," quietly said the scout.

"You are a man?"

"Yes."

"All men mean me harm—are you here to rob my home, or to take my life?"

"Neither; I am here to care for you in your distress—the maiden sent me—you are wounded and suffering—return to your cavern and let me care for you."

"Liar! you are no friend—once I had many friends, but the best friend of all betrayed me; but I had his life and I will have yours."

With a shriek of frenzy the madman rushed forward, and Diamond Dirk as rapidly retreated backward.

"No, I will not kill him—he is doubtless weakened by his wounds—I will grapple with him."

Throwing aside his rifle the brave scout awaited the coming of his huge antagonist, who sprang upon him with the howl of a wild beast.

Diamond Dirk had never met his equal in strength—he now felt that he had met his superior, and as the madman clutched at his knife-handle he knew there was but one thing for him to do.

That thing he did—he bent his revolver muzzle up toward the giant's heart and fired.

A stream of hot blood gushed over him, a low moan was heard, and with a heavy thud the madman fell to the ground.

"God knows I am sorry; but it was in self-defense—ha! he still lives."

"You have killed me."

The tones were harsh, yet in them was no malice.

"Yes; I fired in self-defense."

"You have done me a favor—I have long wished to die."

"Your voice is strong, perhaps the wound is not fatal."

"It is fatal—I am dying; but I die hard. I am not mad now—the cobwebs are all cleared from my brain—I can remember now, and I wish to tell you a story ere I die."

"I will listen to all you have to say; but let me see if I cannot better your condition."

"You cannot; see, yonder comes the moon—it is waning fast, and so is my life," and the madman pointed to the moon rising beyond the distant hills.

"Then, after awhile he said:

"If there is any manhood in you, bury me in yonder valley—I would not have the wolves tear my flesh—promise me."

"It shall be as you wish."

"I thank you; but tell me, do you belong to the encampment in the canyon?"

"Yes."

"What brought you to this wild land?"

"I came to seek a party who came hither to hunt."

"Why are there enemies among you?"

"Are there?"

"Yes: one of your party killed his comrade two days since, in the valley."

"What?"

"I tell you the truth, he drove his knife in his friend's bosom. I saw the act from the hills. He then fled, and I brought the body to the lower cavern. I put it there as a warning to those who would track me, for you had been on my track."

"Yes; but tell me more of this murder. Was the man whose body you carried to the entrance to the cavern on the hill below, slain by the man with him?"

"Yes."

"He said he had lost him in the stream of the boiling-spring. We believed he had fallen into a basin, or that you had slain him. Especially did we believe it when we found his dead body at what we supposed was your cavern."

"The man lied. He killed his friend. I saw

him do it. I war against my race because I hate them."

"Years ago I had a home, far out on this frontier. I had a loving wife and a dear little boy, and I had a friend as well."

"That friend loved my wife. He told her of his love. She scorned him. He was a borderman, and he went to the prairie to drown his love in hunting the red-skins, he said."

"Two months after, a band of Indians attacked my home, left it in ashes, killed my boy, shot me down and carried my wife away."

"I recovered from my wounds, but I was a madman. Yet I had brain enough to find out that my friend led those Indians and carried my wife to their camp."

"Thither I sought her. I found her grave. She had died by her own hand."

"I returned to the settlement and killed that false friend."

"I was seized, thrown into jail and tried for my life. In spite of all the right on my side I was sentenced to be hung."

"His friends sat on the jury. I was not hung, for I escaped from the very gallows. I seized a revolver, shot down several men who barred my way, and escaped."

"By Heaven! you are Robert Redwood—I have heard of you," exclaimed Diamond Dirk.

"Yes, and the last one of that jury of twelve men I killed a few nights ago—men called him in these parts *Trapper Dan*."

"Good God! and here you have lived for long years."

Yes—lived here a *madman*; but not so mad but that I tracked those men to their death; ay, and I have hated my race since then, and I have longed to make men suffer as I have suffered—you see I was crazed, but I am not mad now—no, I will tell you, that within my cavern is one that I intended should die: when I am dead you will find him there."

Diamond Dirk was about to tell him that he had aided his prisoner to escape, but he checked himself, it could do no good he thought.

Moved by what he had heard, and wondering at what the madman had told him regarding the death of Powder Bob, he arose and passed slowly to and fro, his thoughts busy.

At length he turned again to the madman and spoke.

No answer came. Then the scout knelt beside him and placed his hand upon the broad breast.

The pulse of life had ceased to beat.

He was alone with the dead.

As calmly as an infant sinking to sleep, the poor giant maniac had died—his wild, fierce spirit had fluttered away from its earthly casket on noiseless wings—his sorrows were over forevermore.

CHAPTER XX.

LORD GILBERT'S SHOT.

It was some time ere Diamond Dirk made a move after discovering that the madman was dead.

Then he arose, raised the huge form in his arms, and bore it back into the cavern and laid it down, after which he lighted a match and looked around him.

Seeing a bundle of dry brushwood, he soon kindled a fire. He would not leave the maniac's body to become the food of hungry wolves, who would come there as soon as they scented blood.

Then he left the cave, walked rapidly away, and soon came to where his horse was awaiting him.

Mounting, he rode slowly along back to camp, his thoughts busy with all that had passed.

Giving his horse the rein he was unmindful of which way he went, until looking up he discovered a steep hill, which he did not remember to have seen before.

"Old fellow, you are at fault; you are off the trail to camp. Have you been dreaming like your master?" he said, kindly, and he glanced searchingly about him.

He was at the mouth of a heavily-wooded gorge. Upon either side the mountains soared grandly up, and this cut between them loomed dark and foreboding.

Still the horse wished to go into the gloomy gorge, and Diamond Dirk gave him the rein.

After a short ride the darkness became so great that the scout could not see but a few feet before him—the lofty sides of the overhanging mountains shut out the light altogether.

"Hold, old fellow, you have missed it this time—come, we will turn to the right-about."

But the steed seemed to wish to continue, and

it was only by a sharp word that his master could urge him on.

"You are tired, old fellow—we will not try to find camp to-night, but rest. Come, we will turn up this little glen, for there must be good grass for you."

Rich grass was found in the glen, and a nice place for the scout to pass the night; so he lassoed his steed out to feed, spread his blankets beneath a tree, and was soon fast asleep.

The light of day awoke him, and he sprung to his feet.

As he did so he heard the sound of hoofs approaching.

At once he sought shelter, and a moment after a horseman passed the mouth of the glen.

The scout was about to hail him; but he checked himself, and muttered: "Where can he be going? I will follow and see."

His horse was soon saddled, and mounting, he rode quickly on in the trail of the horseman who had just passed.

The trail led into the dark gorge—the tracks were fresh—and the scout noticed another circumstance that surprised him greatly—there were numerous other tracks leading into the gorge.

What could all this mean? He was determined to find out, cost what it might.

Keeping a safe distance behind the horseman he followed slowly.

At length the gorge spread into an open, lovely valley with a stream of water in the center.

Going up the valley was the horseman he was trailing, and not very far in advance. Should he still continue to follow him, and the man look around he would discover that his steps were dogged, so the scout turned to the right and rode up the hillside.

After a few moments' rough climbing he gained a point that commanded a full view of the valley.

To his surprise, under the shadow and shelter of the mountain at the upper end of the valley he beheld a small cabin of logs.

The scout had his field-glass with him and turned it upon the spot.

"What! a home in the Yellowstone Valley? Wonders will never cease—this is indeed a land of mystery!" he muttered.

Then he turned his gaze again upon the horseman, and saw him ride into a small clump of timber, growing upon the bank of the stream, and which had concealed his approach from any one that might be at the cabin.

Hardly had the horseman concealed himself in the thicket, when, turning his glass again upon the cabin, Diamond Dirk saw a horse and rider leave the shelter of the mountain and ride slowly down the valley.

He watched him narrowly and felt certain that he had never seen him before—who could he be?

Slowly the stranger came down the valley trail and had passed the thicket, when from the foliage came a white puff of smoke.

The strange horseman threw his arms into the air, his horse bounded forward and the rider fell heavily to the ground.

"Good God! what can that mean?" cried the scout.

As he spoke a man darted from the thicket and bent over the fallen one.

It was the man whom the scout had trailed.

A moment he remained by the side of the prostrate form—then, as the frightened, riderless steed rushed past him on his way back to the cabin, he sprang to his feet and disappeared in the thicket.

The next instant he reappeared mounted, and with mad speed urged his horse down the valley.

The scout made no effort to stop him as he wheeled into the gorge—he simply mounted his own steed, as soon as the horseman had passed, and galloped rapidly toward the motionless form lying by the thicket.

As he rode along a strange look rested upon the face of Diamond Dirk—he had recognized in the man who fired the shot from the thicket, none other than Lord Gilbert, Earl of Lochiel.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DIAMOND DIRK'S DISCOVERY.

A SWEEPING gallop soon brought Diamond Dirk to the spot where lay the man who had been so strangely fired upon by Lord Gilbert.

Springing to the ground he knelt beside him, at first believed he was dead—the blood oozing from a wound in the back of the head; yet a closer examination proved that the bullet had not broken the skull, but had glanced on the bone, and running half around the head had cut out of the scalp and passed on in its flight.

The man was of majestic presence, tall, well formed, and with a noble, dignified face, with mustache and whiskers, streaked with gray.

He was dressed in buck-skin jacket and leggings, wore top-boots and a slouch hat, while a repeating rifle of recent manufacture was slung by a strap to his back, and a pair of revolvers and knife were in his belt.

"Who can he be? The owner of yonder cabin, that is certain; but what is he doing here in these wilds?

"He does not look like a criminal hiding from his fellow-men—ha! he must in some way be connected with that maiden—Whom have we here?" and the scout turned as he heard the rapid fall of hoofs.

Turning he beheld with surprise the snow-white mustang and his fair rider approaching.

"The Girl Guide here? I thought she was in camp."

The next instant the white mustang halted by his side and the young girl sprung to the ground, her face pale and anxious, as she cried: "Ah, sir, is he dead?"

"No, he is merely stunned—he is not seriously wounded—he will soon recover."

"Did you raise your hand against him?" and the maiden spoke in a tone of touching reproach.

"Upon my word, no—I was on the hill yonder and saw him shot down—the one who did the deed shall not escape, I promise you; he knows not that any one saw him fire the shot."

"I am so glad yours was not the hand that did the deed—are you certain he is not seriously hurt?"

"Yes, he is even now recovering and will soon be all right; but how is it I find you here?"

"I came hither instead of going to your camp—your wounded friend is now at my cabin, and Captain Markham returned last night in search of you."

"In search of me?"

"Yes, he did not like leaving you at the cavern with the madman; but he could do nothing else, loaded down as he was with your wounded friend, and as soon as he brought him to our cabin he went back for you; but tell me, what of the madman?"

"I was forced to fire upon him; but I did not do so until I felt that he would kill me. He lived some time and told me the story of his life."

"Poor fellow! but where can your friend be?"

"He has doubtless missed the way. When I carry your—father, is it?"

"Yes, he is my father; he is all that I have in the world to love."

"See, he is recovering now. Speak to him."

"Father—my father—thank God you are better!"

The soft words aroused the man; he opened his eyes, sat up, and then drew the maiden toward him, while he muttered:

"Did my horse fall with me, or was I fired upon, daughter?"

"Where have I seen that face and heard that voice before?" murmured the scout, while the maiden said:

"You were fired upon, father; some enemy would have slain you; your horse came back to the cabin, and, alarmed for your safety, I sought you, to find this noble scout by your side. He saw your would-be assassin fly."

The man turned his gaze upon Diamond Dirk, and held forth his hand:

"Comrade, I am thankful to you. Come, let us to the cabin."

The scout aided the wounded man to rise, and insisted upon it that he should mount his horse.

In a few moments they arrived at the cabin—a stout log building, with two fair-sized rooms in it, and pleasantly situated beneath an overhanging spur of the mountain, and upon the grassy bank of a pretty stream.

Back of the cabin were outbuildings—a stable and a fowl-house, and to the surprise of the scout he beheld a number of fine chickens stalking about, while cattle fed upon the rich grass of the valley.

"This is indeed a surprise; I knew of no settlement in the Yellowstone," said Diamond Dirk.

"Here have I lived for years, sir; and until my daughter returned last night with your wounded friend, no other human beings have ever been here. We have lived in peace and contentment away from the world," and the man spoke with considerable sadness in his tone.

"And in all those years you have never seen other human beings than yourselves?"

"Oh, yes—twice a year I go to the nearest

settlement for provisions and ammunition, but that is all."

Upon entering the cabin Diamond Dirk found Burt Belford comfortably located in a bed of buffalo-robos, and after greeting him, he at once set to work to dress the wound of the settler, while the maiden began to prepare breakfast for her guests—the first duty of the kind she had ever performed for strangers.

After a hearty meal, for he confessed to being very hungry, the scout said he would at once look up Captain Markham, who he feared had gotten lost, and after finding him would go to the cavern and bury the giant madman.

"Then strike camp and come here with your friends—we have ample food," said the hospitable settler.

"I will, sir—thank you; we may arrive by evening; now I would like a few words with you, settler."

The two walked apart, and the scout told the settler what he had learned from the madman regarding the death of Powder Bob, and that it was the same one who had attempted his life.

"Strange—I know of no enemy that I have—he doubtless mistook me for some one else; but there is a mystery in all this that must be solved—when you come back, then we will find out why he attempted my life."

Mounting his horse, Diamond Dirk rode rapidly away from the peaceful valley.

As he turned into the trail leading to camp he saw a riderless steed before him.

It was the horse of Leo Markham.

But the rider was not far away—he was kneeling upon the ground, and bending over a confused heap of humanity.

Rapidly the scout dashed forward, and beheld a strange sight—the animal ridden by Lord Gilbert was lying dead amid a heap of stones—the object over which Leo Markham was bending was the crushed and bleeding form of the Earl of Lochiel.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FACE TO FACE.

HIS horse has fallen with him, doubtless—the animal's neck is broken, the rider I fear will die; I found them thus," explained Leo Markham as Diamond Dirk rode up.

"He is not dead; but he is seriously hurt; remain by him while I ride to camp."

Away darted the scout, and Leo Markham was alone with the wounded, perhaps dying man, and a look of deep concern was upon his face, for he had learned to greatly like the Englishman.

The young soldier had, as the scout had feared, lost his way, and had just found the trail leading to camp, when he came upon the fallen steed and rider.

Like the very wind Diamond Dirk sped on, and, reaching the encampment, his orders were hastily given.

Prairie Pete and two of his comrades were directed to go to the madman's cavern, bury the giant form, and then come on to the valley.

"You will strike our trail leading to the cavern, and can then follow my trail back to the settler's valley, Pete; now, Pompey, you and Jake fly around, pack up and come along with Buster, whom I will leave to guide you. Mr. Vernon, we will at once ride on and get Lord Gilbert to the cabin as quickly as possible."

Accompanied by the remaining frontiersmen, and Jules Vernon, who seemed deeply distressed at the misfortune that had befallen Lord Gilbert, the scout spurred rapidly away and soon reached the spot where Leo Markham awaited by the side of the yet unconscious man.

A litter was quickly made and the wounded nobleman gently placed thereon.

Then the party moved at a brisk walk in the direction of the cabin in the valley.

It was a long, tiresome walk, but they at length arrived, and the settler and his daughter met them in front of the cabin.

As the eyes of the settler fell upon the white face of Lord Gilbert, he sprung forward and bent a searching look at him.

"Good God! It is my brother Gilbert."

Like a drunken man he tottered back and would have fallen had not the scout caught him.

"Your brother, father?"

"Yes, Ada; my brother—the only brother I had, and who was my father's favorite. Fourteen years ago I parted from him in far-away India. To-day, we meet in the wilds of America, and, oh God! how terrible to meet thus. But he must not die—see! he yet lives and—"

As the settler spoke, the eyes slowly opened, and turned upon the face of his brother.

Then over the face of Lord Gilbert stole a shade of ashen pallor. The eyes stared and the lips murmured unintelligible words.

"Gilbert. Brother, do you know me?"

"Answer me. Will I die? Am I fatally injured?" asked Lord Gilbert.

"I hope not—"

"Yes; you will not live two hours," and the stern voice of Diamond Dirk interrupted the words of hope the settler was giving rise to.

"Are you certain?"

"Yes; I have seen too many men die to make a mistake," coolly replied the scout.

"Then I have much to say. Melrose, I am an unworthy brother. I am accursed as was Cain. Years ago, I published statements of your death, aided by this man," and he pointed to Vernon.

"Thereby, at the death of our father—"

"He is dead, then?"

"Yes. When he died he left me the heir to your title and estates. But that was not the first time he wronged you, Melrose. He sent your wife away."

"I know all that, brother."

"Do you still call me brother?"

"Yes—you are still my brother."

"No, I am unworthy of that name—this very morning I attempted your life."

"Good God!"

"It is true—and more, Melrose, several days ago I was out with one of our hunters—we saw you, and I recognized you then—you passed within ten feet of us."

"Then I wastempted and fell—I would kill you and still remain Lord Gilbert; to do this I killed first my unsuspecting companion; with him out of the way—for he would of course tell that he had seen a strange white man in the valley—I would be free of any witness, then I would seek your life. This morning I believed I had killed you—thank God now that I failed; but you fell from your horse—you seemed dead."

"Yes, I was stunned by the bullet; it is but a slight wound. I forgive you, Gilbert, the temptation was great," and Lord Melrose, for such the reader now knows him to be, spoke with a tone of perfect forgiveness.

The dying man closed his eyes for a moment, and then slowly opened them, while he said:

"Why do I find you here?"

"I followed my wife and child—the father of my wife went into business in New York and failed, then he came West with a number of emigrants.

"I struck the trail of the train and came upon a scene that I shall never forget: my wife, her father, nay, all but one of that train were dead and scalped—that one was my baby girl, nestling in her dead mother's arms—here she is—Ada, this is your uncle."

The maiden had heard all that had passed; but, with the same forgiving nature shown by her father, she leaned over and pressed her lips to the forehead of the dying man.

Then Lord Melrose continued:

"Sick of the world, I took my child and came hither—from the train I got me sufficient material and stores to make myself comfortable—several horses, cows and fowls, that had escaped from the Indians, with provisions they had left, for something must have frightened them off, ere their hellish work was complete."

"To be free from red-skins, I came here, where Indians never come, and here I have lived in peace for long years; now you know all."

Again the eyes of the wounded man closed, weakly, and some present believed that he had sunk into his last sleep.

But they opened again as a strange voice broke on his ears—it was the voice of Burt Belford, who, pale, trembling, and with eyes of fire, stood before him.

CHAPTER XXV.

BURT BELFORD'S STORY.

"In God's name! who are you?"

The dying man spoke with unusual firmness, and his eyes were riveted upon the face of Burt Belford, with a look of horror.

"I am one who sought to slay you, Lord Gilbert—one who has tracked you for two years; but my revenge is cheated—God already has his hand upon you and I must take mine off."

"Look at me—do you remember me?"

"I remember a face such as thine."

"Where is that face now?"

"In the grave."

"True. By whose hand?"

"Mine."

"Yes. Why?"

"He fell in a duel with me."

"Yes. He loved a woman whom that man, Jules Vernon, loved; it was that man's desire to get rid of him—he led him into temptation, and when his brain was wild with liquor, involved him in a quarrel with you."

"He insulted you, and you challenged him—

you fought together and he fell, shot through the heart."

"That was two years ago; but public sentiment caused you to leave France, and one who loved him, who was his only kin, followed you for revenge. I am that person."

"The boy had a sister, and—"

"I am that sister!"

"You!"

"Yes. I was the heir of wealth, with my brother: brought up like a boy, rather than a girl, my education was much like his, and when I was determined to revenge him, I donned man's attire."

"Now that I have found you thus, Lord Gilbert, I am glad, for I wish not your life on my hands. You are dying—so let it be. I pity you, and my poor brother Burt is avenged."

Without another word, the woman, as she is now known to be, turned away, leaving all dazed with surprise—the handsome, fearless, gallant Burt Belford had turned out to be a young girl of twenty.

As she went into the cabin, Ada, the Girl Guide, shyly followed her, and the men were left alone around the litter of the dying man.

For some moments there was a dead silence, and then the dying nobleman said, softly:

"Jules, Jules!"

All turned to look for the Frenchman; but he had disappeared.

"Yonder he goes," said Diamond Dirk, pointing down the valley, where Jules Vernon was riding slowly away from the cabin.

"Let him go—he feels that this is no place for him—he was a mere adventurer that I picked up years ago and proved useful to me, and a pleasant companion—let him go," said Gilbert.

"He is going to his death—the Indians will soon put an end to his existence," said Leo.

"So let it be—it were a fitting death for him—Melrose, come near me."

The settler bent over his brother.

"Among my papers you will find all that you would know about my affairs, and in my valise sufficient gold—if you need gold—I am tired now and need sleep: but tell me again you forgive me, ere I—go—to—sleep."

"I forgive all, brother."

Silently those about the litter stole away and left the dying man with his brother.

An hour after Leo Markham approached the spot—Lord Melrose still sat there, holding the hand of his brother: but it was lifeless, for the spirit of Gilbert of Lochiel had gone—he had sunk into his last sleep—the sleep of death.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CONCLUSION.

The body of Lord Gilbert was laid away in a a grave, dug on the banks of the little stream, and a feeling of relief came upon all when the burial was over—the valley of the Yellowstone no longer held weird mysteries to the adventurous hunters, who had penetrated its fastnesses.

In the afternoon Prairie Pete and his two comrades put in an appearance and made two reports—first, they had buried the body of the madman in the valley; then upon their way to the cabin they had met Jules Vernon, riding down the river.

They had urged him to return with them, not knowing the circumstances under which he had left: but he had refused, and told them he was going on a little scout on his own account—that was the last they had seen of him.

When the tents were pitched, and Pompey and Jake busy around the camp-fires, the valley presented a cheerful, pleasant scene that night: yet a feeling of solemn sadness seemed to rest upon Diamond Dirk and Leo Markham—they were alone in their tent, while Lord Melrose, his daughter, and Belle Ford occupied the cabin.

Yet around the camp-fires Prairie Pete and his comrades were gay and happy—nothing could disturb their equanimity—they took life as it was, not as it had been, and were content with the delicious supper the two negroes had set before them.

A few days longer and Belle Ford was able to leave the cabin, and when she came out in one of Ada's fancy buck-skin costumes, both Leo and Diamond confessed that she was a most beautiful creature, in spite of her short hair.

As the days went on the two maidens and the scout and the young soldier became the best of friends—nay more, they were daily becoming more interested in each other, until Captain Leo Markham declared confidentially to the scout that the lovely Ada Melrose had won his heart, and Diamond Dirk swore that he would be an unhappy man if the beautiful Belle Ford returned not his ardent love.

At length Lord Melrose signified a desire to leave the valley. The winter was coming rapidly on, and he was anxious to return to England and give Ada the advantages her birth and wealth entitled her to.

And so attached had both his daughter and himself become to Belle, that Lord Melrose adopted her as his daughter, and the kinless, almost friendless maiden was happy.

One pleasant fall morning the whole party set out from the valley, Lord Melrose and Ada leaving their cabin-home with full hearts, for lovely though their lives had been, they were yet happy there.

With Prairie Pete and his four companions, Leo Markham, Lord Melrose, and two such fearless maidens as were Ada and Belle, Diamond Dirk did not fear to pass through the Indian country, in spite of Pompey and Jake's admonition, that:

"Dey had better stay whar dey was, as dar was no Ingins dar. Ef dey went away, dey wud all be skulped, sartin."

But Fort Ellis was reached in safety, after a hard but successful trip.

A few days' rest at Fort Ellis, and Lord Melrose and the two maidens, accompanied by Captain Markham and Diamond Dirk, started for the railroad, where the three former took the train for New York, and the two lovers were left behind, but not disconsolate, for they had won the hearts of their lady-loves.

As they rode back to Fort Ellis, Leo Markham said:

"Old fellow, do you know I am tired of a soldier's life?"

"I don't doubt it, captain."

"Yes—my parents left me a handsome income—I have won some little reputation, and I wish to travel in Europe."

"Want a companion, captain?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Then I'll go—you see I am leading this wild life simply from a love of adventure—couldn't settle down to pulling teeth, giving pills, selling tape, or tilling the ground, after four years' cavalry service in the confederate army, so I struck for the frontier, and the life has had great attractions for me."

"I had a few thousands when the war closed, and have added to the amount, until I am independent now, and would be delighted to spend my income in European travel—England, you know, is so delightful, you know," and the scout burst out into a merry laugh, in which the young soldier joined.

And both scout and soldier were as good as their word—they left the frontier, took steamer for England, and one afternoon dropped in on Lord Melrose and the ladies at Lochiel manor.

But the two young men did not do much European traveling, just then—they waited a few months, turned into Benedict, and with their lovely brides, made the tour of Europe, after which they returned to Lochiel manor, where Dudley Dean, alias Diamond Dirk, found a letter awaiting him from Prairie Pete, which gave him all the border news, since his departure, and told him also that a white man called Jules had cast his fortunes with the Sioux, and was a great friend of Sitting Bull.

Then Prairie Pete went on to say that he had seen this white Indian, and that he was none other than Jules Vernon, who had become a renegade from his race.

"An' as fur the Yallerstun," continued Pete, "yer bet tha ain't no one as goes tha—they giv'ns tha kenmry a wide trail, fur they say 'tis ha'nted, an' calls tha Gal Guide a sperrit, an' ther madman a Devil, an' says spooks dwell tha' abint every rock an' thicket; but ther boys is all of us glad ter hear yer and the capt'in is spliced, an' wishes yer good luck an' plenty o' papposes; giv'ns our love to the laddies, an' respects ter ther ole gent, yer pa-in-law, whi' ther boys has named ther Hermit of ther Yaller-

"We must make a trip to that country, some time," said Dudley Dean, when he had finished the letter.

"Yes, I would dearly like to see it again," said Ada.

"And so would I," returned Belle.

"Well, we will go next summer," rejoined Captain Markham.

But the Indian war caused a postponement of the trip; yet, when the summer of 1878 rolls around, if the Sioux are not still on the war-path, a hunting-party will again venture into that little known and wonderful valley of the Yellowstone, some of the mysteries of which have been made known to the kind reader of Diamond Dirk.

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